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Massive earthquake leaves devastation in Haiti

UNICEF and partners are on the ground providing emergency assistance for children and their families.



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Early in the morning of 14 August 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake rocked Haiti, causing hospitals, schools and homes to collapse, claiming hundreds of lives, and leaving communities in crisis. By mid-September, around 650,000 people, including about 260,000 children, were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance.

Children and their families urgently need health care and clean water. Those who are displaced need shelter. Children who have been separated from their families amidst the chaos need protection. UNICEF is working with partners to help keep children and families safe.

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An earthquake flattened her school | UNICEF



**Page last updated 4 October 2021*

What's happening in Haiti?

More than 2,200 people died, 12,700 people were injured, and 130,000 homes were destroyed by the earthquake, leaving thousands of people in urgent need of assistance.

Even before the earthquake, Haiti was facing multiple crises, including growing political instability, growing gang-related violence and insecurity, civil unrest, and rising food insecurity and malnutrition. All of these challenges were further exacerbated by COVID-19. Now, health centres, schools, bridges and other essential facilities and infrastructure on which children and families depend have also been impacted – in some cases, irreparably.



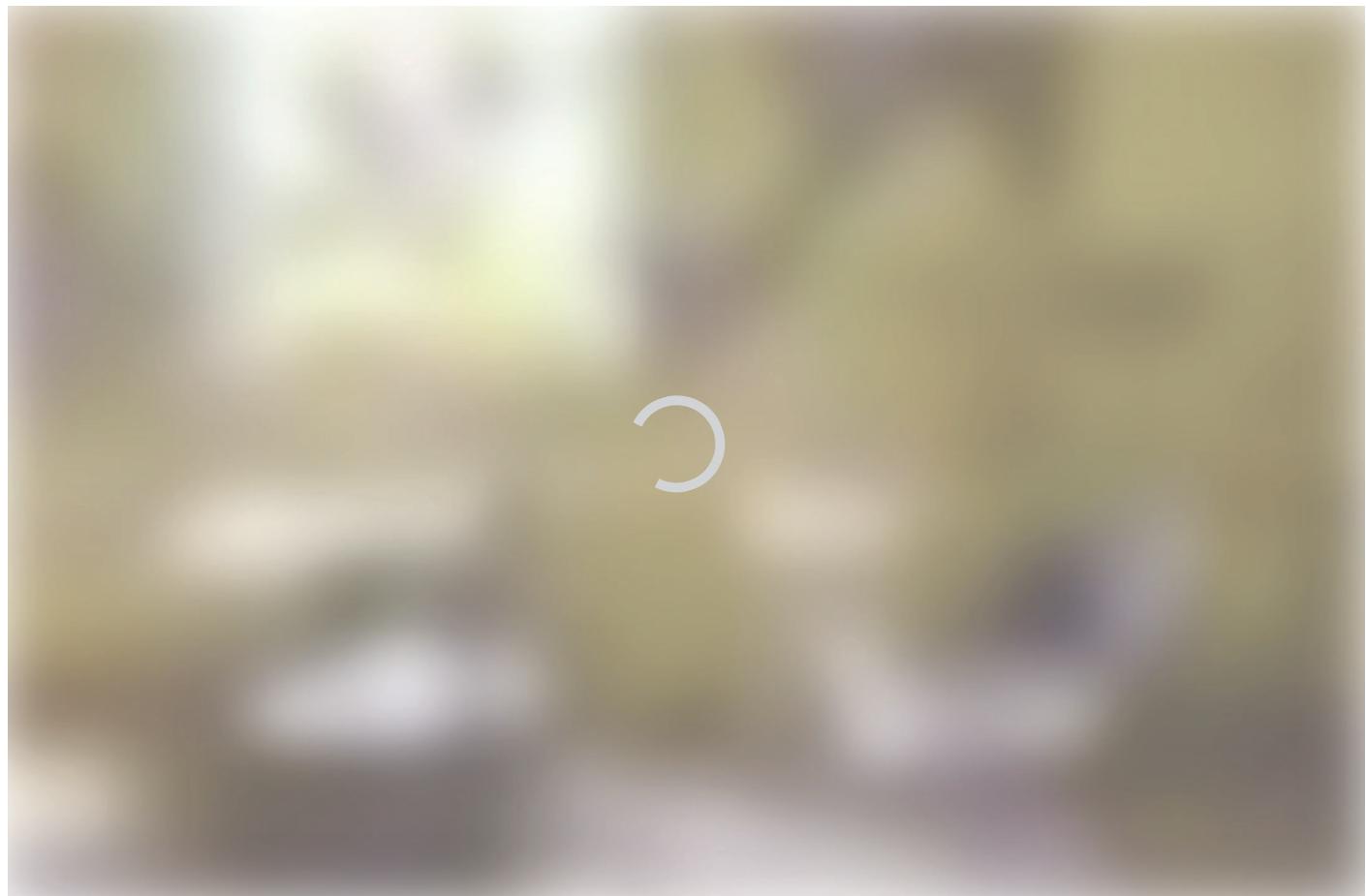
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Haiti's children and families in shock

Essential facilities that children and their families depended on have disappeared. Some have lost family members, while others were separated from loved ones amidst the chaos of the earthquake. In the streets, people carry baskets as they rummage through what remains of their destroyed homes in search of clothing and food.

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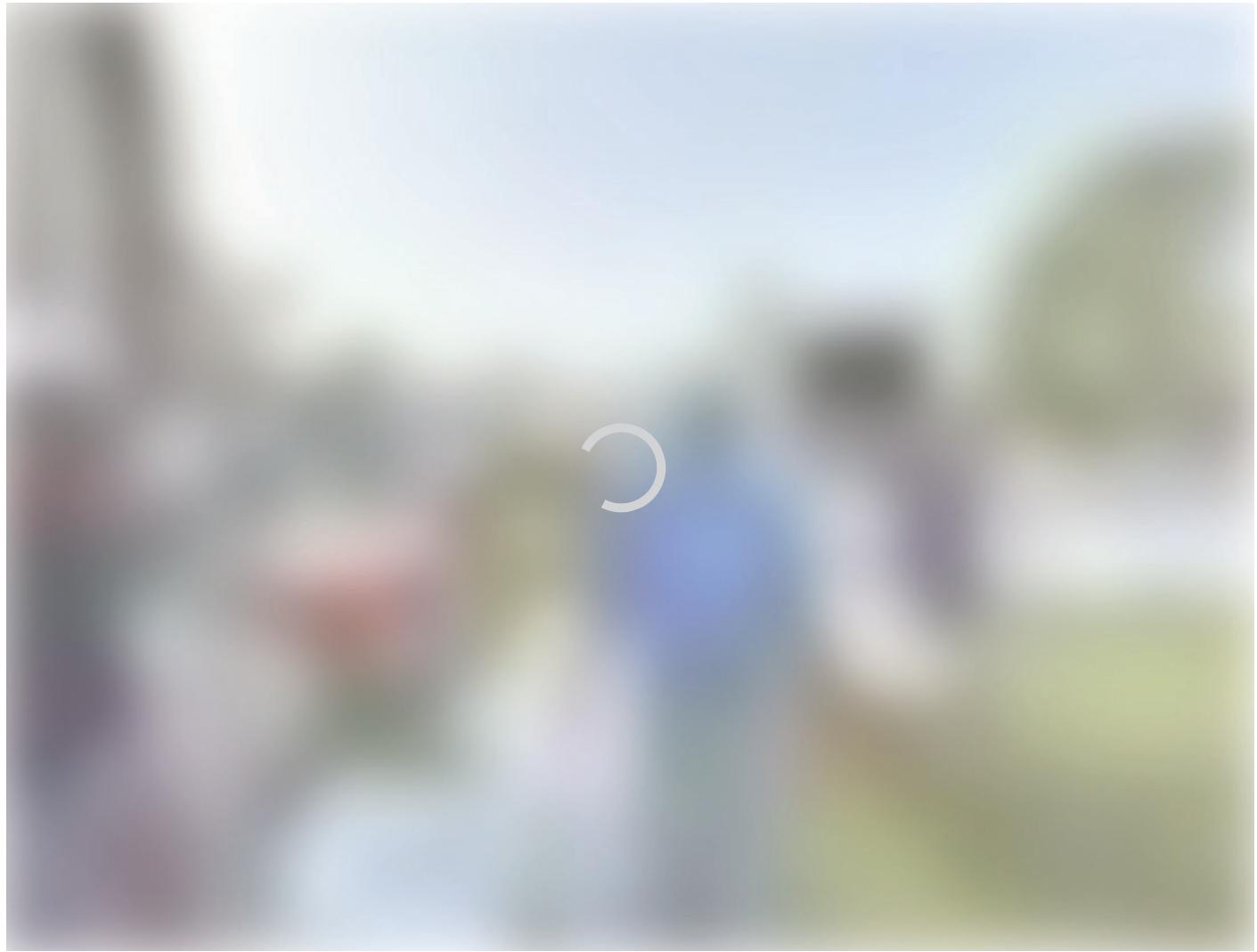
Over a month after the earthquake, [about 70 per cent of all schools](#) in the Southwestern part of the country were still either damaged or destroyed. Ensuring children can return safely to school – and to the normalcy and stability of being in a classroom with their friends and teachers – will help them as they recover from the traumatic experiences of the earthquake and recent extreme weather.



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The inside of a classroom at a college damaged by the earthquake is pictured in Les Cayes.

By the middle of September, at least 500,000 people required support to access water supply services, while more than 26,000 people were located in displacement sites.



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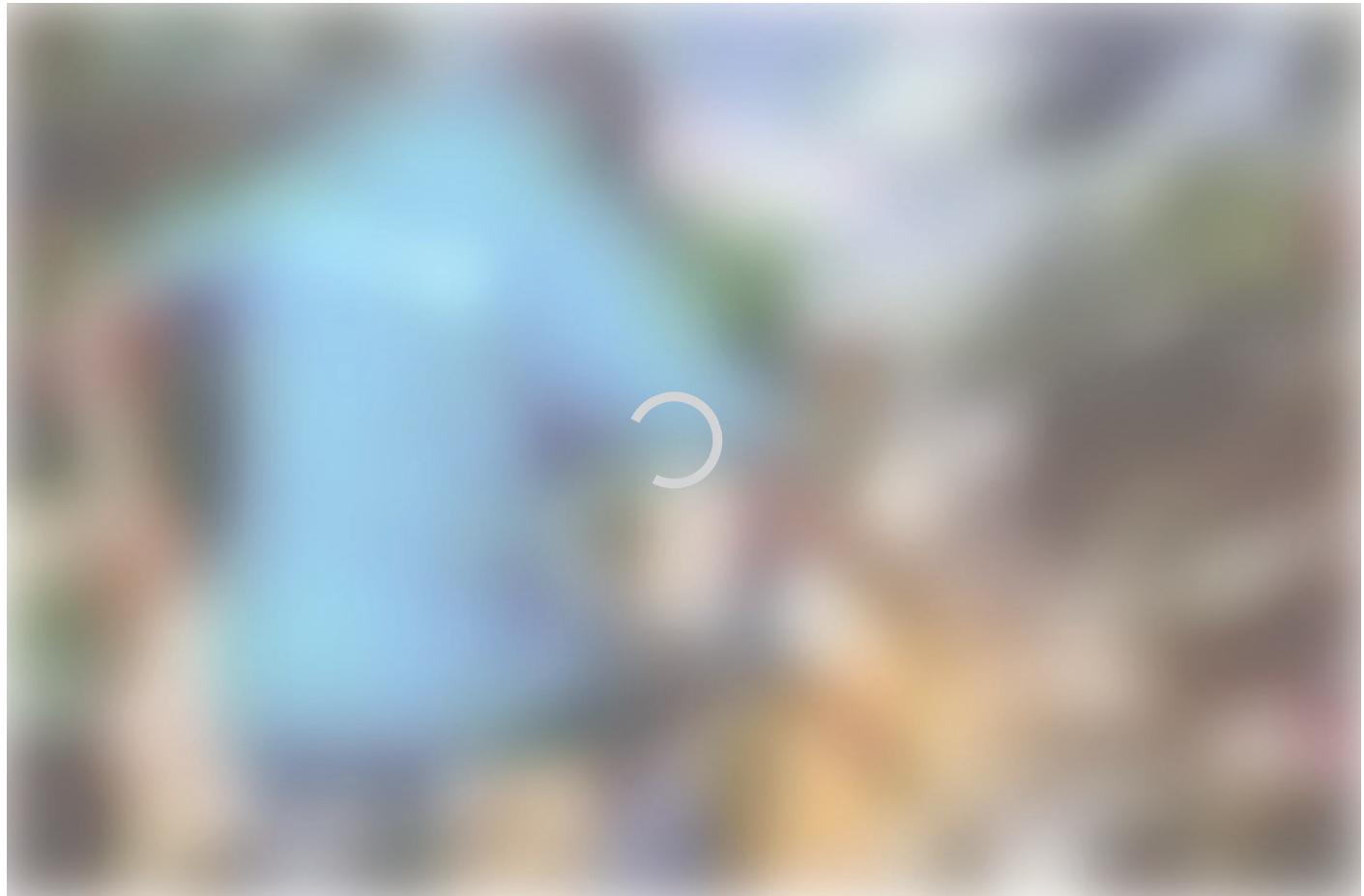
Hygiene kits, including household water treatments products, soap, water storage equipment and handwashing devices, are distributed by UNICEF and partners in Maniche.

How is UNICEF responding to the earthquake?

UNICEF is continuing to prioritize the resumption of essential services – including water and sanitation, health, nutrition and shelter – for the affected population. UNICEF is working with partners to scale up response efforts to get relief assistance to

Massive earthquake and its devastation in Haiti, UNICEF

hard-to-reach areas, including supplying safe water, and distributing hygiene, and other emergency supplies.



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Children collect clean water at a water station in Marcellin at one of the water stations supported by UNICEF.

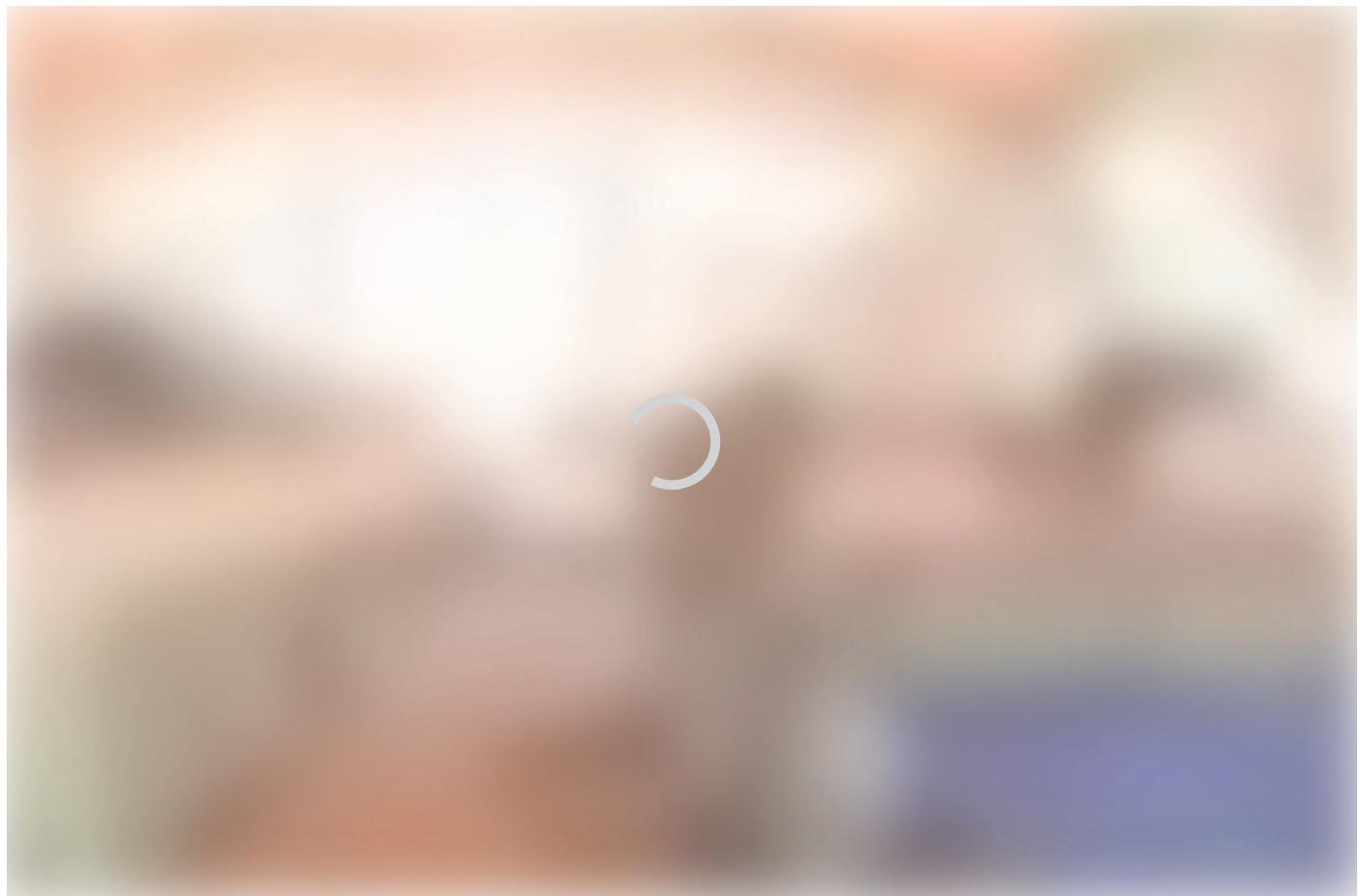
At the onset of the earthquake, UNICEF delivered essential medical supplies to the main hospitals in the south to reach 30,000 people over two months.



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Health supplies being prepared for delivery are pictured in a warehouse.

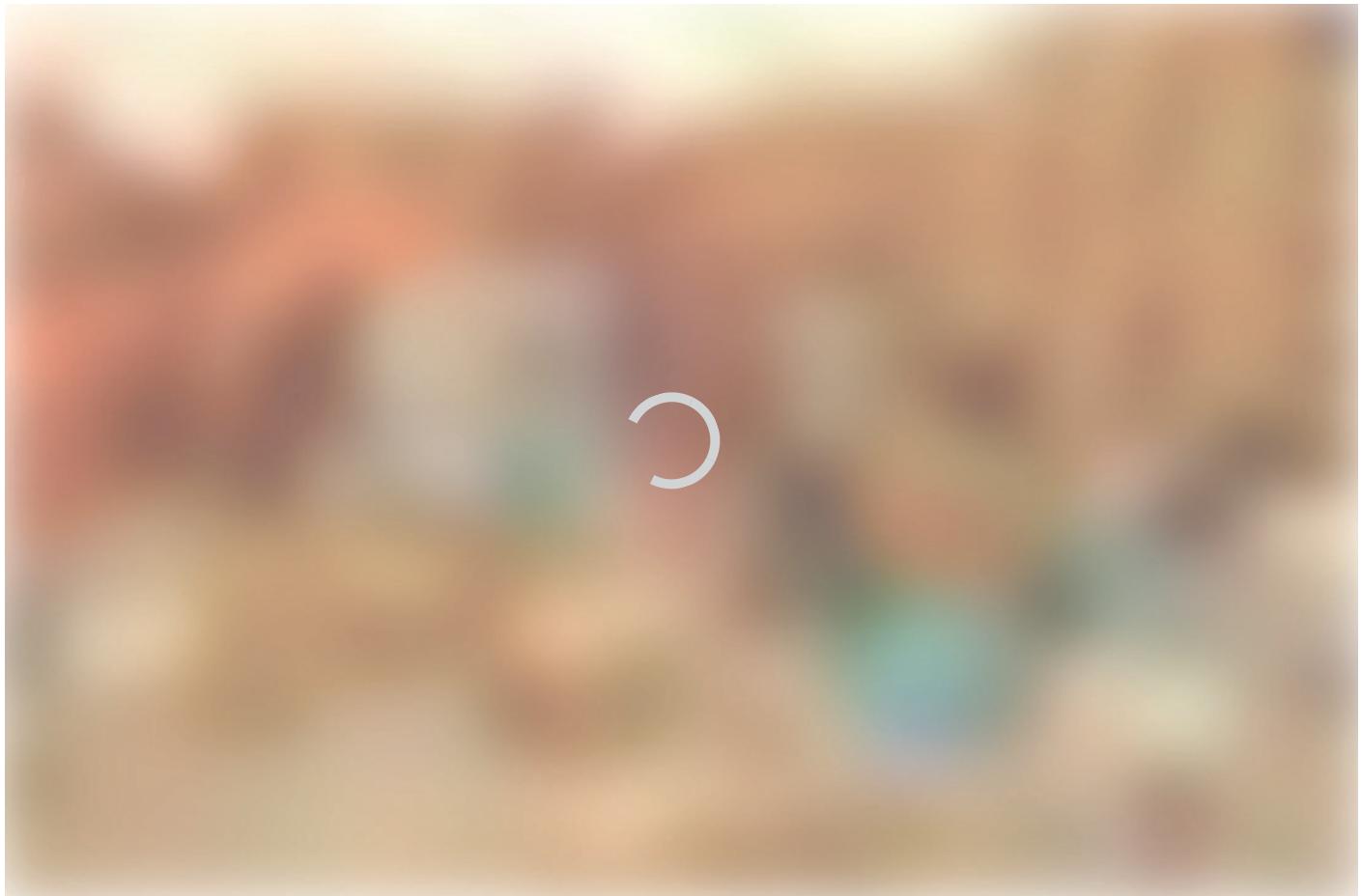
In order to adequately protect children affected by the earthquake, urgent needs include the provision of psychosocial support for children affected by the earthquake, assessments of children's protection needs, and identification of the most vulnerable young people.



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A baby sits on a bed inside a UNICEF-supplied tent at a temporary shelter in Les Cayes.

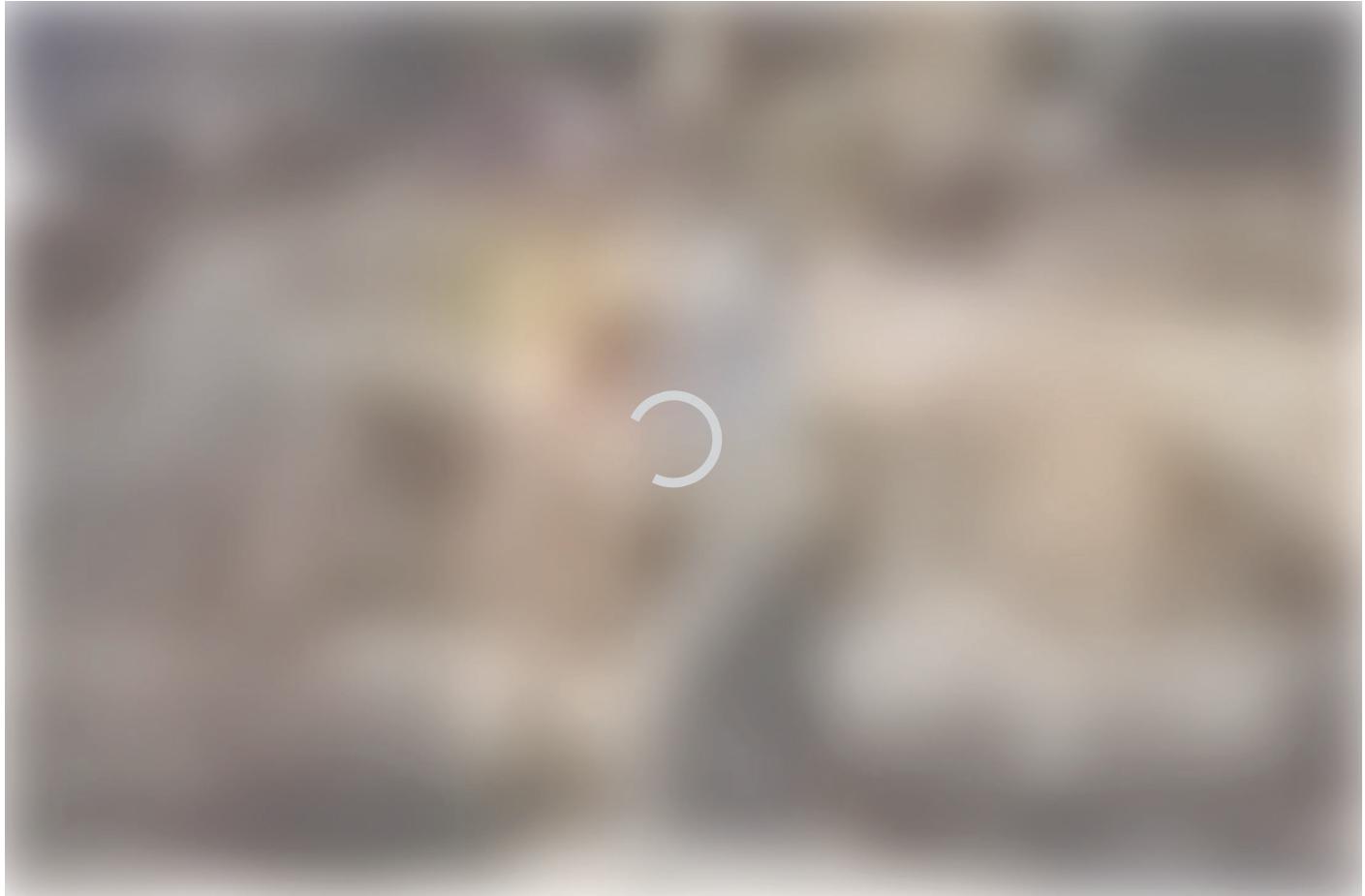
UNICEF has started the distribution of school materials in areas affected by the earthquake. In total, about 100,000 children will receive their own school kits as they gradually return to the classroom in the coming days and weeks.



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Staff working at a UNICEF warehouse prepare school bags and school kits for the reopening of some schools.

By the start of October, the initial phase of the reconstruction work had begun in some schools and was expected to accelerate in the coming weeks, should resources be made available. About 150 new schools will be rebuilt and 900 temporary learning spaces will be set up progressively.



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Work has begun on rebuilding and repairing schools.

In response to the earthquake, UNICEF is requesting a total of \$122.2 million to scale up its emergency interventions in Haiti this year.

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Press release

One month after Haiti earthquake: 260,000 children still need humanitarian assistance - UNICEF

14 September 2021



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On 17 August 2021, patients of Ofatma Hospital in Les Cayes, Haiti and their families wait for medical attention in a UNICEF-supplied tent in the hospital's courtyard. UNICEF installed the tents to shelter patients who feared the hospital building could collapse.



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earthquake that caused their homes, schools, health facilities and entire communities to crumble," said Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"Health services remain largely disrupted in Southwestern Haiti. Many hospital buildings are either damaged or destroyed. Many families with children are fearful of seeking treatment at the few health facilities left standing. Limited access to safe water and basic health services is putting young lives at risk."

Health systems are struggling to keep up with the needs, with 12,000 people injured and an estimated 82 health facilities in the most affected departments damaged or destroyed. Even a month on, some rural communities remain unable to access functional health facilities due to infrastructure damage. Limited health care capacity presents elevated health risks —such as wound infection and risk of tetanus.

The lack of routine health care services has increased the risk of maternal and newborn deaths, as many maternity and surgical wards do not meet the criteria for safe deliveries. The ability of health authorities to prevent, identify and treat malnutrition has also been weakened by the earthquake.

In response to these increased needs, UNICEF is working with partners to provide essential medicines, medical supplies and equipment and nutritional commodities, support the resumption of health care services for damaged or destroyed health centers, and strengthen health supply chain management.

UNICEF has equipped 24 mobile clinic teams with essential medical equipment and medicines to provide integrated health and nutrition services — including the identification and treatment of acute malnutrition — in remote communes.

"If families with children cannot access health facilities after the earthquake, it's critical to bring lifesaving health services to them so we can prevent child death

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- 50,000 people reached with essential medical supplies for a period of three months in 19 main hospitals involved in victims' emergency care.
- 300,000 people received Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for a period of three months.

In infant and maternal health, UNICEF is prioritizing the continuation of primary health care for children and women, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO). Over the next six months, UNICEF will support the provision of essential health and nutrition services targeting over 251,000 children and women, including the delivery of essential supplies to treat common childhood illnesses.

Other health interventions that will be scaled up include the expansion of routine immunization coverage for 35,000 children, the identification and treatment of acutely malnourished children, programmes in support of infant and young child feeding and nutrition supplementation to prevent malnutrition and the provision of maternal, newborn and childcare.

UNICEF will also support the reconstruction and reparation of 30 damaged hospitals and primary care centres, as well as the training of 3,000 healthcare facility staff and community health workers in infection prevention and control (IPC), including the continuation of COVID-19 prevention and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE).

UNICEF is requesting US\$73.3 million to respond to the humanitarian needs due to the earthquake, focusing on providing urgent support in health, education, WASH, nutrition and child protection, including gender-based violence (GBV), over the next six months. To date, less than 11 per cent has been received.

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2,300 prepositioned 41 rolls of tarpaulin, 15 bladders and chlorine. Additional supplies are on their way including 3 water treatment units, 41 bladders, tarpaulins and 31,200 hygiene kits which cover 156,000 additional people for 3 months.

- Installation of 11 water treatment plants and 51 bladders, with a total volume of 415,000 litres, as well as the provision of fuel for water trucking.
- 70 blocks of removable and reusable latrines and handwashing facilities.
- Distribution of tarpaulins and water purifiers in 10 children's homes/orphanages hosting some 340 children.
- Psychosocial support activities are ongoing with 178 children (96 girls and 82 boys) at recreational spaces in Les Cayes and 133 people were sensitized to the risks of child exploitation and trafficking.
- Ensuring that more than 1.5 million children (girls and boys) and women access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse and receive specialized support services in the next 6 months.
- Setting up 900 secure semi-permanent learning spaces (classrooms) and rehabilitate 400 partially destroyed classrooms to ensure 100,000 children have access to quality education and early learning.
- Providing emergency cash transfers to support up to 20,000 of the most vulnerable families with children and/or pregnant women to access essential services and non-food items.
- Training of at least 450 U-Reporters from the South department, Grand'Anse and Les Nippes in Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Gender-based violence, and hygiene in emergencies and mental health management.



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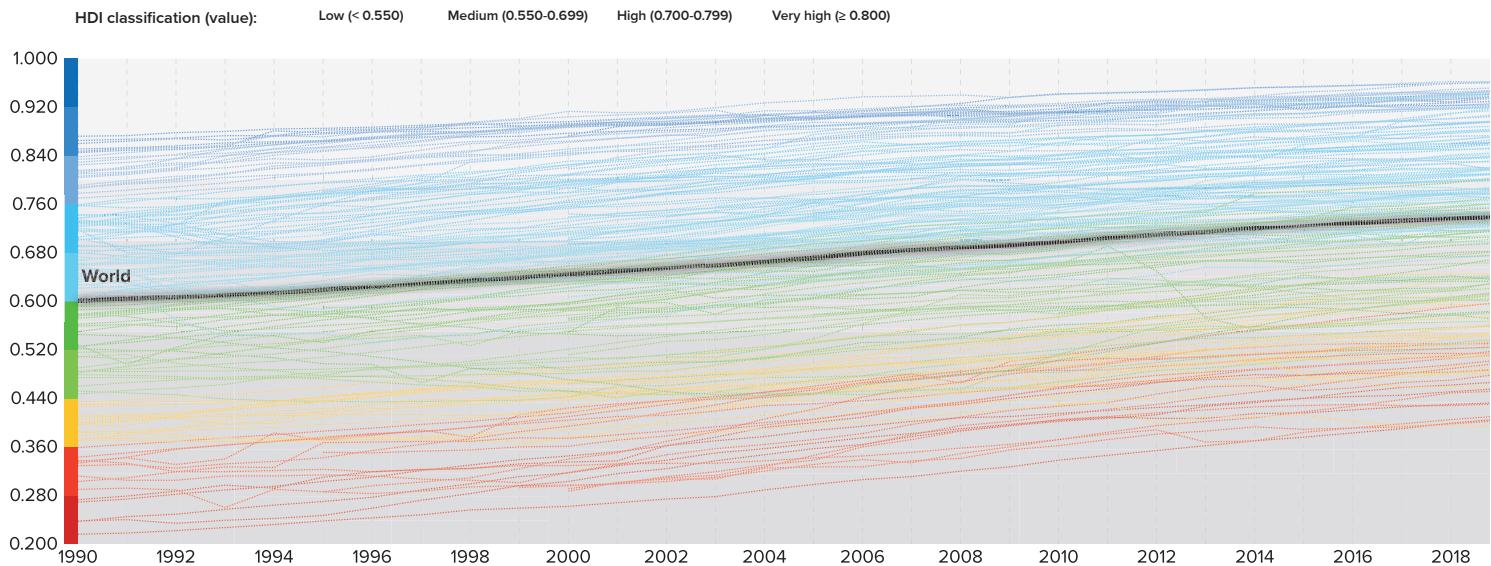
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The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions.

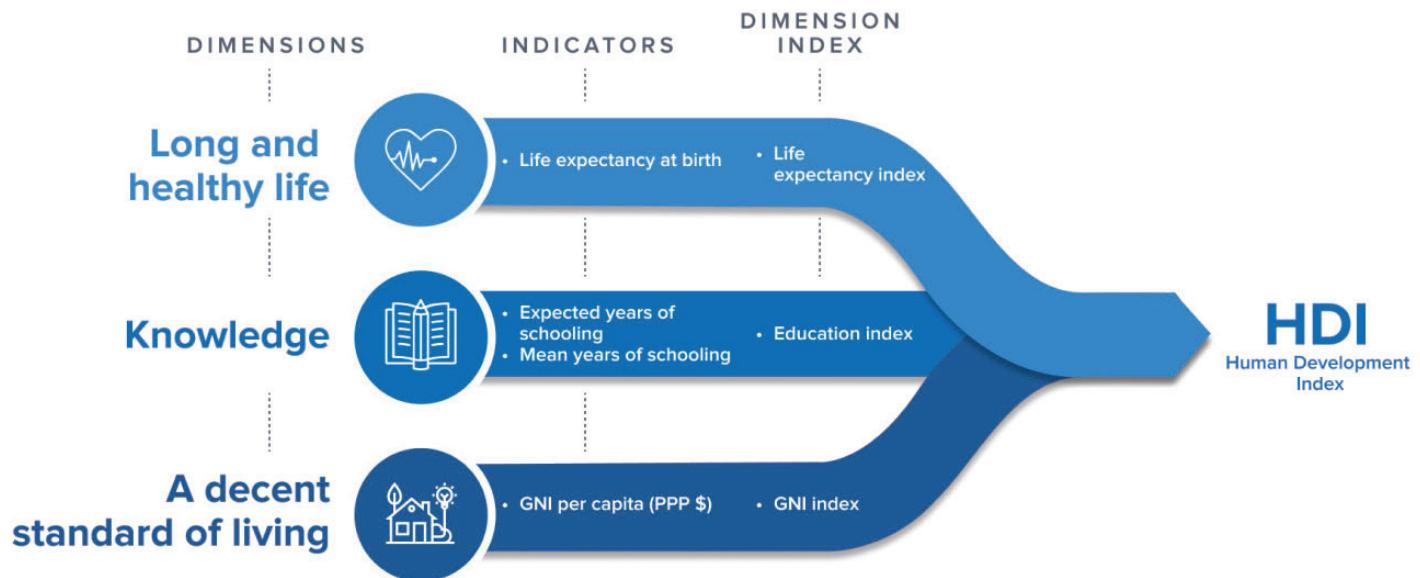
The health dimension is assessed by life expectancy at birth, the education dimension is measured by mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and more and expected years of schooling for children of school entering age. The standard of living dimension is measured by gross national income per capita. The HDI uses the logarithm of income, to reflect the diminishing importance of income with increasing GNI. The scores for the three HDI dimension indices are then aggregated into a composite index using geometric mean. Refer to Technical notes for more details.

The HDI can be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities.

The HDI simplifies and captures only part of what human development entails. It does not reflect on inequalities, poverty, human security, empowerment, etc. The HDRO provides other composite indices as broader proxy on some of the key issues of human development, inequality, gender disparity and poverty.

A fuller picture of a country's level of human development requires analysis of other indicators and information presented in the HDR statistical annex.

HDI Dimensions and Indicators



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Haiti: Bachelet deeply disturbed by human rights impact of deteriorating security situation in Port-au-Prince

17 May 2022

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Haiti AR_001904



GENEVA (17 May 2022) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Tuesday said she was deeply disturbed about the severe human rights impact of the surge in violence involving heavily armed gangs in Port-au-Prince. She urged the Haitian authorities, with the support of the international community, to promptly restore the rule of law and protect people from armed violence.

Between 24 April and 16 May, at least 92 people unaffiliated with gangs and some 96 alleged to be gang members were reportedly killed during coordinated armed attacks in Port-au-Prince. Another 113 were injured, 12 reported missing, and 49 kidnapped against ransom, according to figures corroborated by UN human rights officers. The actual number of people killed may be much higher.

Extreme violence has been reported, including beheadings, chopping and burning of bodies, and the killing of minors accused of being informants for a rival gang. Sexual violence, including gang rape of children as young as 10, has also been used by armed gang members to terrorize and punish people living in areas controlled by rival gangs. Sources also reported the presence of minors in the gangs.

“Armed violence has reached unimaginable and intolerable levels in Haiti,” Bachelet said. “It is crucial for urgent steps to be taken to restore the rule of law, to protect people from armed violence and to hold to account the political and economic sponsors of these gangs.”

Thousands of people, including children, have been forced to abandon their homes over the past three weeks and find shelter in temporary sites or host families in other areas of the country.



including food, water and medicines," the High Commissioner said.

Movement along the two main national roads connecting the capital to the rest of the country has been seriously compromised as gangs have controlled access to areas under their influence.

"Such restrictions on the movement of people and goods could also have long-term devastating impacts on the already difficult economic situation in Haiti," the High Commissioner added.

The High Commissioner said the fragility of State institutions, in particular the police and judiciary, has fueled the lawlessness and expressed fear that the violence will only escalate. Ongoing police operations have not managed to re-establish public order and protect the local population, and there have been reports of some human rights violations during these operations.

"Despite its multiple and long-standing challenges, Haiti should not be forgotten and should remain a priority for the international community. I urge the international community to redouble its efforts to prevent the situation from spiraling further out of control," Bachelet stressed. "State institutions need to be strengthened to combat impunity and corruption. The authorities have a duty to protect life from all reasonably foreseeable threats, including from threats emanating from private individuals and entities, such as armed criminal gangs."

In the coming weeks, as the UN Security Council debates the future mandate of the UN presence in Haiti, it is paramount that human rights of Haitians be at the heart of the international response, including on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, Bachelet stressed.



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**Sexual violence in Port-au-Prince:
A weapon used by gangs to instill fear**

October 2022



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I. Executive summary

1. In early July 2022, Rose¹, 25 years old, was one of at least 52 women and girls who were collectively raped by armed elements during a week of intense violence opposing two rival gang coalitions in Cité Soleil.

In the afternoon of 7 July 2022, Rose, a mother of four and five-months pregnant, was severely beaten and raped, in the presence of her children, by three heavily armed masked men. The latter had forced their way into her home during an attack launched against the residents of Brooklyn, in Cité Soleil. Earlier that day, Rose's husband had been shot dead by members of the same gang. Before leaving, the armed individuals set her house ablaze, forcing Rose and her children to sleep out in the open in a public space for many nights.

2. The story of Rose, like that of many other women, illustrates the ordeal of victims of sexual violence who are targeted by armed gangs.
3. This report, jointly published by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), shows how armed gangs have used rape, including collective rapes, and other forms of sexual violence to instill fear, punish, subjugate, and inflict pain on local populations with the ultimate goal of expanding their areas of influence, throughout the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. As of August 2022, large swathes of the capital, accounting for at least 1.5 million people, were reportedly under the control or the influence of gang elements.
4. Gangs are able to commit acts of sexual violence and other human rights abuses mainly because of widespread impunity and ease of access to high caliber weapons and ammunitions trafficked from abroad.
5. Women, girls and boys of all ages, as well as to a lesser extent men, have been victims of ruthless sexual crimes. Children as young as 10 and elderly women were subjected to collective rapes for hours in front of their parents or children by more than half a dozen armed elements during attacks against their neighborhoods. Viewed as enemies for their real or perceived support to rival gangs, or for the simple fact of living in the same areas as those rival gangs, some of these victims were mutilated and executed after being raped.
6. Gangs have also resorted to sexual violence as a weapon to disrupt the social fabric by targeting women and girls crossing “frontlines” or moving across neighborhoods on foot or in public transport to carry out their daily livelihood activities, such as going to work, to marketplaces or to schools.
7. Sexual violence is also used by armed elements to bolster their position of power. Rape or the threat thereof is frequently used against kidnapped women and girls to press their families to pay ransom. Even though gangs usually present themselves as defenders of the communities under their control, their elements often coerce young women, girls and sometimes men, viewed as sexual objects, into becoming their sexual “partners”. Furthermore, in these impoverished and marginalized areas, women and girls may also be

¹ All names in this report have been changed for confidentiality and protection purposes.



encouraged by their own families to have non-consensual intercourse with gang elements in exchange for in-kind benefits, such as food, drinking water, and other material gains, as well as “protection” from abuses committed by other armed men.

8. Impunity remains the norm for the vast majority of cases of sexual violence perpetrated by gangs. Some victims reported that they also preferred returning to work and trying to resume a “normal life” as a self-protection mechanism for their relatives and themselves, instead of initiating any legal action. Contributing factors for the lack of accountability are the deficiency of rule of law institutions and widespread insecurity. In this context, the specialized police units have not been able to meaningfully address sexual crimes involving gang elements due to structural challenges such as insufficiency of resources and lack of gender sensitivity. Institutional weakness is compounded by the fact that the two main courthouses of the capital, in downtown Port-au-Prince and in the commune of Croix-des-Bouquets, were attacked, raided and ransacked by armed gangs in June and August 2022, respectively.
9. Ensuring immediate access to adequate medical and psychosocial care to prevent further physical and psychological harm should constitute a crucial first step towards victims’ rehabilitation. However, the efforts of national and international actors working in this field to guarantee the rights of survivors have generally been insufficient due to multiple challenges and barriers.
10. Overall, the Haitian health system is ill-prepared and poorly equipped to respond to the basic health needs of its population, let alone to provide specialized medical care for victims² of sexual violence. This is particularly evident in cases involving severe and traumatic injuries from collective vaginal and anal rapes. In addition, due to gang-related violence, victims generally do not have access to available post-rape treatment kits which must be administered within a window period of 72 hours after the aggression, which exposes them to a higher risk of contracting HIV or sexually transmitted diseases and to unwanted pregnancies. This same violence has also had a detrimental impact on health care workers, who have been attacked and/or kidnapped while performing their duties.
11. The persistent blockage of the main roads by armed gangs and the chronic shortage of fuel have also had a negative effect on the normal functioning of basic services, including healthcare centers. According to the latest information available, the fuel crisis triggered in late August by the latest movement of mass protests, still ongoing at the time of publication, had caused 50% of the main hospitals across the country to cease delivering emergency healthcare services as usual, and 60% of internal medicine, pediatric, surgery and obstetric services had also been severely disturbed nationwide³.
12. Another major challenge relates to the lack of psychosocial care to address the mental health consequences of sexual violence. These consequences can be severe and long-

² The term “victim” is used in this report as it denotes a person's legal status, but OHCHR is aware of, and acknowledges, the fact that each person who has endured sexual violence may have different views about how they prefer to be referred to, and some may prefer to be called “survivors”.

³ According to data collected on 28 September, 77% of these disturbances were due to lack of fuel, as healthcare centers, as almost any other service provider in the country, depend mainly on generators to obtain electrical power.



lasting, particularly when sexual violence has been used with the purpose of inflicting individual or collective trauma. In Port-au-Prince, there are very few specialized psychologists, and access to mental health care is widely insufficient. Coupled with the social stigma associated with sexual violence, this situation leads victims to suffer in silence since very few of them dare to come forward and disclose what they have endured.

13. Victims, who suffer from trauma and stigma from their own communities, are often compelled to remain in the area where they were attacked due to a lack of financial means to move somewhere else. Shelter programs providing safe habitable housing, as well as victim reintegration and rehabilitation support, outside gang-controlled areas are very rare. As a result, there is very limited data on the extent and impact of sexual violence involving armed gang elements.
14. In light of this extremely bleak picture, the United Nations Security Council, in its resolution 2645 (2022), which extended the mandate of BINUH in July 2022, expressed grave concerns about the extremely high levels of gang violence and sexual and gender-based violence, as well as ongoing impunity for perpetrators. In this resolution, the UN Security Council also decided to strengthen the capacity of BINUH to help national authorities to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence
15. The Security Council also called upon Member States to prohibit the transfer of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition to non-State actors engaged in or supporting gang violence criminal activities, or human rights abuses. It also expressed its readiness to take appropriate measures, including assets freeze or travel ban measures, against those engaged in or supporting gang violence, criminal activities, or human rights abuses.
16. It is important to recall that the primary responsibility to protect and fulfil the rights of victims of sexual violence lies with state authorities. Although the ongoing armed violence may reduce available resources, this does not exonerate the Haitian authorities from taking the necessary steps to achieving the realization of a minimum core obligations of the right to health and provide effective remedy and reparations for victims.
17. Given the wide range of challenges faced by victims of sexual violence to seek justice and reparations, and even merely to overcome what they have survived, support to Haitian authorities in fulfilling their obligations is essential. As enhanced joint efforts are required by national and international actors, BINUH and OHCHR propose the following key and achievable recommendations to the national authorities, medical and/or psychosocial service providers, and international actors:
 - ✓ To public, private and non-governmental service providers and civil society organizations with the support of the United Nations, develop awareness campaigns and other sensitizations measures to stop sexual violence used by armed gangs as a means to instill fear in the population.
 - ✓ To service providers in coordination with national authorities and with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors, strengthen the availability, accessibility, and quality of medical and psychosocial care facilities for survivors of sexual violence linked to



gangs, including through increased and sustained funding and support for organizations that provide medical and psychological care to victims.

- ✓ To service providers with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors, prioritize support for accessible and inclusive shelter programs that include reinsertion options for survivors. Ensure in this regard that rapid and flexible financing is available to implementing partners.
- ✓ To the Haitian National Police with the support of the United Nations, strengthen coordination efforts among relevant units within the Haitian National Police working on sexual violence, protection of minors and kidnappings, through the establishment of a coordination mechanism, and joint training and investigations.
- ✓ To the Haitian Ministry of Justice and Public Security with the support of the international community establish a judicial task force to address impunity for crimes of sexual violence.
- ✓ To national authorities with the assistance of countries in the region, support law enforcement authorities to tackle the smuggling and uncontrolled circulation of illicit weapons and ammunition, as these are one of the main enablers of gang violence, including sexual violence.

18. A complete list of recommendations is available in Section VI of this report.

II. Methodology

19. This report is submitted pursuant to the mandate of BINUH, established by Security Council Resolutions 2476 (2019), 2547 (2020), 2600 (2021) and 2645 (2022) to support the Government of Haiti in its efforts, including to combat human rights abuses and fulfill its international obligations.
20. BINUH's Human Rights Section (HRS), with the support of an OHCHR specialist in sexual violence deployed in April and May 2022 in Port-au-Prince, conducted more than 90 interviews with victims and witnesses of incidents which occurred in 2021 and 2022, as well as with service providers, community-based organizations, national and international nongovernmental organizations, and representatives of the Haitian state with a view to verify the abuses documented in this report.
21. Interviews with victims and witnesses were conducted individually and confidentially so as not to compromise their safety. The names of victims have been changed to preserve their identity and that of their families. Other details about the location or any other information that could lead to the identification of sources were also changed to avoid causing further harm.
22. The allegations received have been verified and corroborated by the testimony of independent and credible sources. The team relied on the "reasonable grounds to believe" criterion to establish the facts and human rights abuses.



23. Given the nature of the mission carried out by the team, and the difficulties encountered to access certain locations and interlocutors, as a result of the escalation of armed violence, as well as fuel shortages, this report can only describe the main manifestations of sexual violence, the overall impact of this violence on victims and their communities, and the challenges in the response.

III. Context

24. To a large extent, the Haitian society is centered around male dominance and hegemonic masculinity, which perceive the female body as an “object” to be owned and controlled by males⁴. Violence against Haitian women and girls is deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions, as well as in social, economic and political conditions. Societal gender norms indisputably play a role in the use of sexual violence by armed elements.

25. The use of sexual violence in the context of armed violence is not a new phenomenon in Haiti. There are widespread reports of groups of armed men who raped women during the military regime of 1991-1994⁵. Likewise, before and after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in 2004, rape was used by gangs throughout the country to instill fear in the population⁶. According to a random survey led by a team of researchers, between February 2004 and December 2005, at least 35,000 women and girls were raped in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince⁷.

26. While gang violence significantly diminished during the presence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), from 2004 to 2017, it rose again during the “Peyi Lok” popular protests in 2018. A case in point is the massacres of La Saline in November 2018 and September 2019, during which at least 41 women and girls were raped, some of them collectively, by gang elements⁸. Since then, the metropolitan area of Port-

⁴ For more information, see, inter alia: Jean Baptiste, Kenaz, J. B. (2021). “Perceptions of Domestic Violence Among Women in the Department of Artibonite, Haiti”, Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies. 9959, available at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/9959> (last seen: 19 August 2022); Kang, J.Y. (2011). “The hidden epidemic: violence against women in Haiti”, Honors thesis, Duke University, available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10161/3738> (last seen: 19 August 2022); and Gage, A.J., Hutchinson, P.L. Power (2006). “Control, and Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in Haiti”. Arch Sex Behav 35, 11–24 (2006), available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-006-8991-0> (last seen: 19 August 2022)

⁵ Human Rights Watch (1 July 1994). “Rape in Haiti: A Weapon of Terror”, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a7e18.html> [last seen: 24 September 2022]

⁶ Amnesty International (27 November 2008). “Don’t turn your back on girls: Sexual violence against girls in Haiti”, Index Number: AMR 36/004/2008, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/004/2008/en/> (last seen: 19 August 2022)

⁷ Kolbe, A. R., & Hutson, R. A. (2006). “Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households”, The Lancet, 368(9538), 864-873, available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0140673606692118> (last seen: 19 August 2022)

⁸ According to the summary of facts established by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in its Resolution 65/2019 (Precautionary Measures No. 793-19), “On November 13, 2018, in La Saline, a neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, criminal gangs allegedly perpetuated (*sic*) a series of attacks that resulted in “[...] an incalculable number of victims [...]”: more than seventy dead, at minus eleven raped women or girls, dozens of looting and fire or destruction



au-Prince has experienced a steady deterioration of the human rights situation with a sudden exacerbation in early 2022. During the first semester of 2022, according to data collected by the United Nations, armed violence linked to gangs caused at least 1,881 casualties among the local population (826 killed, 518 injured and 537 kidnapped).

27. According to a recent analysis, 60% of Port-au-Prince is under the control or influence of gangs.⁹ Areas under gang control are characterized by an absence of state institutions, state programs and policies, as well as by extreme poverty, and marginalization. This environment, together with the uncontrolled circulation of illicit weapons and ammunition, creates a fertile breeding ground for the expansion of gangs. Among these arms, there are military-grade sniper rifles, belt-fed machine guns and semi-automatic pistols¹⁰.
28. The large availability of these weapons has contributed to increase the capacities of gangs to use sexual violence to humiliate, instill fear and inflict individual and collective trauma, with the ultimate purpose of expanding and consolidating their control over certain areas and their local population¹¹. While there is no comprehensive data on the scale of this violence, according to BINUH-OHCHR's qualitative assessment, women and children are disproportionately affected by sexual violence.
29. Against this backdrop, Haiti has a fragile public health care system with some of the worst health indicators in the Americas¹². Therefore, over the years, victims of sexual violence

[...]. [...] the gang members returned to La Saline with the aim of intimidating the population and pressuring them to remain silent and not go to court. [...] On September 7 [2019] [...] about thirty women were allegedly sexually assaulted by the aforementioned criminal group in La Saline." For further information, see: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Resolution No. 65 IACHR. Precautionary Measure No. 793/19 (Haiti), 31-01-2019, available at: <https://www.oas.org/fr/cidh/decisions/pdf/2019/65-19MC793-19-HA-fr.pdf> (last seen: 25 August 2022)

⁹ Congressional Research Service (CRS) (2 August 2022). "Haiti: Political Conflict and U.S. Policy Overview", available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12182> (last seen: 13 October 2022)

¹⁰ Charles, J. & Weaver, J. (18 August 2022). "Weapons smuggling to Haiti is on 'alarming trend. Feds crack down, ask for public's help", Miami Herald, available at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article264561751.html> (last seen: 25 August 2022)

¹¹ A recent report published by OHCHR on the impact of arms transfers on human rights outlines that the diversion of arms and unregulated or illicit arms transfers have a particular far-reaching impact on the enjoyment of human rights by children and youth, including the right to life, survival and development, as well as the right to education and to health, and that States have due diligence obligations to prevent and protect children and youth from human rights violations and abuses, including by taking appropriate measures to prevent the diversion of arms and unregulated and illicit arms transfers. For more information, see: UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (16 September 2022). "Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Impact of arms transfers on human rights", A/HRC/51/15, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session51/list-reports> (last seen: 25 September 2022)

¹² The latest regional overviews made by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) indicate that Haiti has some of the worst health indicators within the Americas, with the lowest life expectancy at birth (64 years old), the highest under-5 mortality rate reported (81 per 1,000 live births), and the lowest rate of physicians within the health system (2.3 per 10,000 persons). For more information, see: Pan American Health Organization (2019). "Core Indicators 2019: Health Trends in the Americas". Washington, D.C.: PAHO, available at: https://www3.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15499:core-indicators-2019-health-trends-in-the-americas&Itemid=1894&lang=en (last seen: 19 August 2022)

Haiti also presents the greatest prevalence of undernourishment among the population (46.8 percent), as well as the highest incidence of anemia among women of reproductive age (almost 50 percent). For further details, see: FAO,



have relied primarily on private or NGO service providers to access medical care. The latter have recently faced important security, operational and financial challenges to operate in gang-controlled areas and beyond, and to provide adequate medical assistance as well as psychological and reinsertion support to victims. Psychological support is particularly critical so that victims and their families can resume a normal life, as trauma is often a major reason that prevents them from even initiating legal action.

IV. Sexual violence used by armed gangs as a weapon to expand and/or consolidate territorial control

30. In Haiti, armed gangs use sexual violence to instill fear, intimidate, subjugate and control local populations. The impact of this violence is devastating and affects all aspects of the lives of the survivors and their families. The following paragraphs provide just a glimpse of what they have suffered.
31. During its assessment, BINUH and OHCHR established that armed gang members resort to sexual violence following at least four *modus operandi*.

Sexual violence during gangs' attacks

32. Most armed gangs operating in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince deliberately use sexual violence against local populations as a means to expand and consolidate their control over certain areas. The armed clashes in Martissant (June 2021, and March-April 2022), Village de Dieu (October 2021), Croix-des-Bouquets and Tabarre (April-May 2022) and Cité Soleil (July 2022), showed how armed elements perpetrated rapes, including collective rapes, against men, women, boys and girls, while engaging in other acts of violence such as killings, beating and destruction of property.

On 8 July 2022, heavily armed gang members forced their way into Marie's home in Cité Soleil. After her husband was executed with a gunshot to the head, the armed men forced her to lay on top of his dead body, and then they raped her one after the other in the presence of her children. After the attack, the assailants set her home ablaze. She and her children had time to get out of the house before it was completely burned down, together with the body of her husband.

33. As recounted by several victims and eyewitnesses, the brutality with which gang elements committed these acts of sexual violence points to a clear intention to inflict severe pain and to punish those considered to be supportive of the rival group or who simply live in the area under the control of the latter. On several occasions, perpetrators collectively raped

IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF (2021). "Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends." Santiago, FAO, available at: <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/es/c/1470147/> (last seen: 19 August 2022)

Furthermore, according to the latest estimates released by the World Bank on 14 June 2022, coverage of prevention measures is stagnating or declining, especially for the poorest households, in a country with the lowest GDP per capita in the LAC region (US\$1,815). For more information, see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview> (last seen: 19 August 2022)



women, girls and boys in front of their relatives after having invaded their homes or after having taken them to public spaces with the deliberate intention to inflict as much humiliation and fear as possible.

On 13 March 2022, Cathia, the girlfriend of a gang leader, and several months pregnant, was first raped and then shot and killed in her home in Martissant by members of a rival gang. After the attack, the body of the 30-year-old victim was stripped half naked and its image was posted on social media.

34. The assessment also established that partners or relatives of gang members have been particularly exposed to sexual violence during attacks by rival gangs, as a way to demonstrate their power and assert their supremacy. Not only partners of gang leaders were raped and killed by rival gangs, but the images of their mutilated bodies were also circulated on social media to showcase the ruthlessness of the perpetrators and publicly humiliate the opponents.

35. Groups in situation of vulnerability, including children, elderly people and LGBTI+ persons, were not spared during these attacks. For instance, local sources described how gang elements in Croix des Missions (May 2022) forced children, some as young as 10 years old, out of their homes, and compelled them to walk to abandoned areas where they were subjected to collective rapes by several armed men.

36. In a social context marked by sexism and misogyny, women and girls are the most affected by sexual violence. However, men and boys are not spared from this dynamic, especially when sexual violence is committed during armed confrontations. For instance, during the gang clashes of April 2022 in Tabarre, a 12-year-old boy was raped by five individuals who had also raped his older sister minutes before, after they had forced their way into their home. After being raped, the child was forcibly taken away by the assailants and, a few days later, his body was found, with a gunshot wound to the head, laying on a pile of garbage in an abandoned area.

Louise, a young woman, recounted that, in early April 2022, she and other two female neighbors, including a 10-year-old girl, were collectively raped by a group of heavily armed men during gang confrontations in Croix-des-Bouquets. That day, gang members broke into her home and forced her to walk, together with the two other victims, to an isolated, abandoned area, where they were raped multiple times. The experience had been so traumatizing that she could not remember how many men raped them.

37. The human rights team also received detailed accounts of rapes against older women in the context of turf wars in Martissant, in March 2022. These incidents aim to humiliate the victims and to break apart the social fabric, given the respect for the elderly in the Haitian culture. When asked by her family what had happened to her, one of these victims, afraid of being stigmatized for the sexual assault that she had suffered, only told them that she had been beaten up and robbed by armed men.



In June 2021, in the context of inter-gang violence in Martissant, Pierre, a young man, was assaulted by several armed individuals who beat him and used their weapons to rape him. Pierre recounted that, out of fear and trauma, he did not dare to get out of his home to seek medical attention and, instead, healed his wounds using traditional herbs.

team that gang members had subjected them to “corrective rapes” in order to “cure” their “homosexuality”.

39. Fear of further attacks and/or stigmatization by their families and communities led some survivors who had the financial means or a social network, to leave their neighborhoods and to relocate to other areas of the capital or of the country. However, once victims of sexual violence manage to relocate, they are usually deprived of their belongings and resources, and are then exposed to further risks and vulnerabilities. Some victims recounted having been forced by their host families to resort to prostitution to pay for their rent and food.

Sexual violence against women and young girls while crossing “frontlines”

40. In addition to sexual violence in the context of clashes, gang elements have resorted to rapes to disrupt the life of individuals and communities. In several instances, women and girls were attacked and sexually assaulted while moving across neighborhoods under the control of rival gangs to carry out their daily livelihood activities.

41. The team was informed about a place commonly known as “dèyè mi” (“behind the wall”, in Creole) in the commune of Cité Soleil, an open space which acts as a separation between areas controlled by rival gangs. According to testimonies, women and girls are exposed to being raped by gang elements when they try to cross this area to go to work or to reach services located outside their neighborhoods. They are thus compelled to take a different and longer route to reach their destination. Similar places were also identified in Martissant.

42. In addition, local media and other sources have reported sexual assaults committed against women while traveling across gang-controlled areas on public buses to go to work or to study. The victims were forced out of the vehicles at gun point, stripped of their belongings, and were then subjected to collective rape and other forms of sexual violence in broad daylight¹³. Others were kidnapped and subjected to further abuses.

¹³ iCiHaiti (18 December 2019). “Insecurity : Individuals attack a bus and rape female passengers”, available at: <https://www.icihaiti.com/en/news-29544-icihaiti-insecurity-individuals-attack-a-bus-and-rape-female-passengers.html> (last seen: 22 August 2022)



Sexual violence committed during kidnappings

43. For years, kidnappings against ransom payment have become a critical source of revenue for gangs. While most cases remain unreported, the data available indicates that there has been a steep increase in kidnappings over the past few months. During the first semester of 2022, at least 537 people were kidnapped in the country. No social category has been spared. Lawyers, healthcare workers, students, individuals from marginalized communities as well as staff of international organizations have been targeted. According to BINUH and OHCHR data, women and girls account for almost 20 percent of the victims of kidnappings. There is no data regarding the percentage of sexual violence among kidnapped women and girls since most of them do not report these incidents for fear of reprisals or shame. However, testimonies collected from some victims and witnesses indicate that armed gang elements very frequently use sexual violence during abductions.
44. The team gathered testimonies of former female abductees and social workers who accompanied victims about the use of sexual violence by gangs during kidnappings. According to local experts, rape or the threat thereof, illustrates the grip and influence of gang members over the victims. Some of these testimonies spoke of how abductees, including teenagers, were raped, sometimes several times, by one or multiple armed captors while they were kept in abandoned houses for days or weeks. In some cases, the kidnappers used recorded videos of the rapes to press the parents or other family members to pay the ransoms.
45. In addition to the trauma of being kidnapped and sexually abused, some of the victims contracted HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Others also became pregnant. Many victims experienced guilt as the ransom paid for their release drove their families into economic and social destitution. In several instances, families had to sell or mortgage their homes and all their valuable possessions. This feeling of guilt, coupled with the stigmatization associated with rape while in captivity, explains why a large majority of victims do not want to disclose that they have been subjected to sexual violence.

Sexual violence used to consolidate control over an area and to subjugate the local population

46. Besides resorting to sexual violence as part of a strategy to expand their area of influence or to inflict pain to rival communities, gangs also use this violence as a way to assert power and control over people living in their own areas. In an environment where fear prevails, local populations are subjected to subjugation to gang elements.
47. Relations between people living in marginalized areas and gang members are extremely complex. The role of gangs, whose elements have often been born and raised in the neighborhood, oscillates between “predators” and “protectors”. In the absence of state presence, gang leaders portray themselves as the bearers of the social and economic aspirations of these populations who lack access to the most basic services and opportunities. As mentioned by some victims, “*given that state authorities are not here, the gang leader is the chief, the police and the judge*”.



48. While some gangs present themselves as defending their community, the team collected accounts of women and girls being coerced into becoming “sexual partners” of armed elements in most gang strongholds (such as Cité Soleil, La Saline, Martissant and Fort Dimanche). In these areas, young women are often viewed as sexual objects, with little consideration given to their consent. As a local source put it, “*women in gang-controlled areas belong to the gangs*”. Against this backdrop, it is not rare for gang members to approach the victims’ parents to coerce the girls into accepting the request.

49. Furthermore, social workers explained to the team that, in gang-controlled areas, where poverty and unemployment prevail, women and girls may also be encouraged by their own families or friends to enter into “relationships” with armed elements, who are among the few to earn money owing to their illegal activities. These relationships provide the girls and their families with an access to in-kind benefits, such as food and drinking water, and other material gains, as well as a sort of “protection” from potential abuses committed by other individuals. For instance, engaging in this kind of relationships is perceived as a mechanism to reduce the likelihood of being raped by other members of the gang. By contrast, declining sexual demands from gang elements can be met with reprisals, including rape, killing and arson attacks against the victims and their families.

50. Of particular concern, however, is the fact that sexual solicitations of gang members or requests for “protection” in exchange for sexual favors are rarely considered as a form of sexual violence by victims, their families and their communities, despite the obvious presence of coercion.

51. During its investigation, the team also documented several cases where children and teenagers were victims of sexual assault, including rape, by gang members while carrying out daily activities.

52. Since these assaults are generally carried out without any form of sexual protection, victims are highly vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. In many cases, coerced sexual relations result in pregnancies, including among teenagers. The phenomenon of sexual violence is reportedly so pervasive that it has come to be considered as an inevitable part of life by many families, and even by whole communities, living in marginalized neighborhoods. As a result, many victims end up resigning themselves and neglect to seek medical care to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

53. Although the majority of sexual violence incidents involved male perpetrators and female victims, it is important to highlight that some testimonies also mentioned sexual violence incidents of a same sex nature. The team documented cases of sexual exploitation concerning gay men and boys who were forced to become sexual “partners” of gang leaders to be allowed to remain in the area. These men and boys were also victims of other forms of abuses by gang members, such as being forced to cook and take on other domestic chores.

On 22 May, Anne, a 14-year-old girl, was raped by a gang element in a street of Fontamara when she was fetching water for her family. The victim, who became pregnant after the rape, stated that not only did she live in constant fear of being sexually assaulted again but that, after the attack, she had to face stigma within her own community.



V. Responses to sexual violence and steps forward

54. Overall, the Haitian health system is ill-prepared and poorly equipped to respond to the basic health needs of its population, let alone to address any major medical crisis. Lack of public investment in the medical sector has placed Haiti at the bottom of world rankings health indicators.
55. However, Haitian authorities have a core obligation to allocate adequate resources and adopt effective measures to ensure that victims of sexual violence have access to comprehensive medical treatment, mental health care and psychosocial support.
56. While the current situation of armed violence may reduce available resources, this does not exonerate the Government from taking the necessary steps to ensure *inter alia* the access to functioning health facilities, goods and services on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups. The Government must also efficiently address impunity for crimes of sexual violence.
57. However, despite the extent and far-reaching consequences of sexual violence involving armed gangs in Haiti, national efforts to respond to the needs and protect the rights of survivors with the support of international actors have generally been weak and inadequate¹⁴.

Data deficit related to sexual violence

58. First of all, there is a data deficit on the extent and impact of sexual violence involving armed gang elements against men, women and children, despite the fact that this tactic has been a longstanding feature of violence in Haiti. At least since 2018, gangs have resorted again to sexual violence in the context of attacks against areas controlled by rival gangs. A case in point was the attacks in La Saline in November 2018 and September 2019, during which at least 41 women and girls were raped, some of them collectively, by armed elements. However, it is important to highlight that very few survivors have been willing to report these incidents and to seek help due to several factors, including fear of retaliation, stigmatization associated with this type of abuse, and lack of support services.
59. This data deficit partially explains why service providers have not prioritized gang-related sexual violence in their responses, focusing instead on sexual violence perpetrated within the domestic sphere.
60. Most respondents acknowledge the urgent need to improve the quality of the data collection process on sexual violence incidents involving gangs in order to drive better analysis. This in turn can lead to improved decision making and allow for a more efficient delivery of assistance and services to those who need them most. At the moment, no state-run services and/or international organizations systematically collect these data.

¹⁴ For instance, although there is a National Plan to Fight Violence Against Women (2017-2027), its implementation is facing serious challenges, including a significant lack of human and material resources. For more information on this national plan, see:

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/plan_national_v_bg_2017-2027.pdf (last seen: 25 August 2022)



Sensitization and awareness raising in gang violence related contexts

61. Taking preventive measures to stop sexual violence from occurring in the first place are critical. In this regard, numerous sensitization campaigns and other awareness raising initiatives, have been carried out for years, in particular during the annual 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, albeit with mixed results. In Haiti, like in many other countries, social norms and cultural beliefs have created structural unequal power relationships between men and women, marginalizing women and girls in education, employment, governance and other public spaces. This creates an enabling environment for gender-based violence.
62. As part of a lessons-learned exercise, future campaigns to stop gender-based violence, including sexual violence, should focus on, and be specifically adapted to, targeted audiences. They should also be based on analyses that allow the identification of the specific root causes and motivations that drive sexual violence. In addition, it is crucial that sensitization campaigns to address gender-based violence, including sexual violence, also reach armed gang elements.

Referral pathways and coordination

63. The deterioration of the security situation, coupled with the crisis of the public health system resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, has severely impacted and undermined the work of health care service providers and women's rights organizations, as well as other civil society actors working to tackle sexual violence. At present, very few actors, with highly limited resources, are trying to provide a multisectoral assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and defend their rights.
64. In this context, BINUH and OHCHR also observed that these actors lack coordinated mechanisms to better refer victims and maximize their limited resources. Additionally, their working methods do not necessarily prioritize prevention nor are they oriented to respond to sexual violence resulting from gangs. As a result, the large majority of victims, as well as their families, do not benefit from adequate responses to redress the harm suffered and to help them resume and restore their lives.

Access to and availability of medical care for victims of sexual violence linked to gangs

65. BINUH and OHCHR have documented the growing challenge for health care providers to deliver medical care for victims of sexual violence in gang-controlled areas. In an extremely volatile environment, these providers spoke about the difficulties in negotiating safe access, including in the context of changes in gang leadership and in the shift of gang alliances.
66. Access and acceptance of medical care for victims of sexual violence linked to gangs can be fragile and do not provide full protection from attacks. Throughout 2021 and 2022, several health care facilities or hospitals run by government or NGOs were attacked or compelled to suspend their activities due to threats or violence from gangs. Some of them were providing essential medical assistance for victims of sexual violence, including emergency post-rape care, and sexual and reproductive health care. For instance, on 2 August 2021, Doctors Without Borders closed its clinic in the area of Martissant after it



was fired upon on different occasions. The clinic was relocated to a more secure area, 3 km away from Martissant. On 1 April 2022, another clinic run by Doctors Without Borders in Cité Soleil suspended its activities for approximately four weeks following threats against its patients and personnel¹⁵.

67. Health care workers have not been spared from acts of violence, including kidnappings, causing high levels of attrition among the personnel. More than 20 medical doctors and nurses have been kidnapped since January 2021. Local sources also explained to the team that it has become more and more dangerous for victims to leave their neighborhoods to reach out to medical services in so-called “safe areas”. In many gang-controlled areas, checkpoints have been erected to restrict the movement of residents. Victims of sexual violence are particularly targeted by gangs’ surveillance and control and cannot leave their neighborhoods freely. Fear of reprisals, especially if the victims are accused of informing rival groups or the police, has also been a major impediment for victims to seek medical care outside their neighborhoods.
68. In order to overcome the challenges of accessibility, some survivors have attempted to take alternate or much longer routes perceived to be safer to access health facilities. In addition, some NGOs have developed *ad hoc* mobile clinic programs to reach out to at-risk populations for basic care, particularly in a volatile security context. However, these clinics generally only provide the most basic forms of care focused on minor health conditions and may not be equipped to treat survivors of sexual violence.
69. It is important to highlight that for the past few years, bilateral and multilateral donors as well as national and international NGOs have dedicated resources and funding to support the response to fight gender-based violence perpetrated within the family or domestic sphere. They have also struggled to adapt their efforts to the needs and rights of victims of sexual crimes resulting from armed gang violence. In the end, the readiness of medical care for these victims is largely insufficient.
70. Health care providers interviewed during the mission pointed out that victims of sexual violence involving gangs require more and more specialized medical intervention due to the brutality of the assaults they have experienced. For instance, severe and traumatic injuries from collective vaginal and anal rapes necessitate surgical procedure which can be conducted by only very few doctors and facilities in Port-au Prince.
71. In addition, they added that while most functional clinics and hospitals in Port-au-Prince have post-rape treatment kits, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection, medication for STIs and emergency contraception, in general victims do not have access to these treatments within the appropriate window period due to gang-related insecurity. Treatment for the prevention of HIV infection must be administered within 72 hours after exposure to be effective. For other STIs, a treatment may be administered

¹⁵ Doctors Without Borders (29 July 2021). “Haïti : Médecins Sans Frontières suspend, temporairement, ses activités à Martissant (Port-au-Prince)”, available at: <https://www.msf.fr/communiques-presse/haiti-medecins-sans-frontieres-suspend-temporairement-ses-activites-a-martissant-port-au-prince> (last seen: 25 September 2022); and Le Figaro (2 April 2022). “Médecins sans frontières suspend ses activités dans un quartier pauvre d’Haïti”, available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/medecins-sans-frontieres-suspend-ses-activites-dans-un-quartier-pauvre-d-haiti-20220402> (last seen: 25 September 2022)



beyond this period. Regarding emergency contraception, it is only effective if taken within five days of the assault.

72. The team was also informed that insecurity, fear of stigmatization and/or lack of money to pay for transportation prevent many survivors from returning to healthcare centers after their initial visit to complete their treatments or for follow-up care. In most cases, health service providers do not have the means either to trace patients for follow-up care.

Mental health and psychosocial care and support for victims of sexual violence

73. The accounts of the survivors interviewed illustrated the high level of psychological trauma that they experienced after being abused. Many of them suffer periodic episodes of flashbacks, acute anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts or other mental health issues.

74. Trauma and the social stigma associated with sexual violence often go hand in hand. Several interlocutors, including victims themselves, also shared with the team their fear of being abandoned by their families and shunned by their communities if the aggression was to be disclosed. Similar statements were documented among victims of rape while in captivity. They concealed what they had endured from close family members, and even refrained from seeking medical support because they did not want to be labelled as a “kidnapper’s wife”, as some of the victims put it.

75. Similarly, male survivors face significant social barriers to tell their stories to anyone, even to their closest family members, due to discriminatory social attitudes and gender stereotypes, which place men as the traditional community protector. As such, they are perceived to be immune to sexual violence. In addition, several of them, including LGBTI+ persons, spoke about discriminatory attitudes by medical providers who, in some cases, questioned whether the sexual assault had not been consensual.

76. In Haiti, despite the fact that a mental health action plan has been developed by the Ministry of Public Health and Population¹⁶, there are still very few psychologists with dedicated expertise on sexual violence, and even fewer specialized in treating survivors of gang-related sexual violence. Most of them have been hired by international medical NGOs. Others, who work as private practitioners, propose consultation fees that are too high to be afforded by the large majority of victims, especially considering that mental health treatments may take a very long time. Medication is also costly and most of the patients cannot access it.

77. It is therefore critical and an absolute priority to scale up psychological support for victims as well as for their families. A couple of victims who benefited from a sustained psychosocial treatment provided by NGOs told the team how this treatment had been fundamental for their healing and social reintegration.

78. It is also equally important to bolster shelter programs to provide safe and habitable housing as well as holistic health, reintegration and rehabilitation support for survivors and

¹⁶ For more information, see: Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population (October 2014). “Composante santé mentale de la politique national de santé”, available at: <https://mspp.gouv.ht/site/downloads/Composante%20Sante%20Mentale%20MSPP.pdf> (last seen: 8 September 2022)



their families, outside gang-controlled areas. NGO-led efforts to build up these programs are underway. However, the scale of shelter projects is relatively limited compared with the survivors' needs. Indeed, one of the largest existing programs was able to support only approximately 35 victims and their families in 2021. All individuals who were interviewed agreed on the urgency to bolster coordinated and holistic victim-centered responses.

Access to justice

79. As a lesson-learned from other contexts where sexual violence is rampant, it is only when comprehensive, survivor-centered services are in place that victims will be in a position to report the abuses that they have suffered and to testify before law enforcement officers.
80. According to the information received during the assessment, impunity for sexual violence crimes remains the norm. Rule of law institutions are not only under-resourced and under-staffed, but they are affected by lack of independence and corruption. Their representatives are also subjected to intimidation and reprisals by gang elements.
81. Concurrently, armed gang violence has forced out state representatives, including police officers, of a number of marginalized neighborhoods where most cases of sexual violence have been reported.
82. Units to combat sexual violence exist in some operational police stations across the capital. In particular, there is a dedicated unit within the Central Directorate of Judicial Police (DCPJ), called the Unit to Combat Sexual Crimes, (*Unité de lutte contre les crimes sexuels*, UCLS). Additionally, the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (*Brigade de Protection des Mineurs*, BPM) and the Anti-Kidnapping Cell (*Cellule Contre Enlèvement*, CCE) are mandated to receive complaints of sexual violence.
83. During its investigation, the team noted that coordination and cooperation between these different police units was deficient. In addition, the work of the police is often hindered by the reluctance of many victims to denounce rape and other incidents of sexual violence, fearing possible reprisals from the perpetrators and/or stigmatization by society.
84. It was also noted that some legal provisions regulating access to justice for victims are not being correctly implemented by some law enforcement officials. For instance, although it is not mandatory to present a medical certificate corroborating that the victim has been subjected to sexual violence to initiate legal proceedings, in practice, the prospects of obtaining justice and accountability are very low without this medical document. This is particularly concerning due to the difficulties for many victims to seek medical assistance.
85. Significant operational, logistic and resource constraints hamper the effectiveness of the police to adequately document and investigate sexual violence. Victims and local actors also complained about a general lack of sensitivity among law enforcement officers on how to manage cases of sexual violence without discrimination and stigmatization.
86. Lack of trust in police capacities, as well as concern over possible leaks of confidential information and testimonies to gangs, were also raised as impediments for victims to report cases. Overall, the issue of protection of victims and witnesses is one of the critical barriers dissuading them from engaging with rule of law institutions. Fear of retaliation or reprisals



from gang elements is high among victims, but also among police officers. As of the time of publication of this report, there was no governmental protection program for victims of sexual violence who decide to file a complaint.

87. Since sexual violence is perpetrated by heavily armed gangs, efforts to reduce the circulation of weapons and ammunitions are of the utmost importance. In a country that produces no weapons, this means primarily fighting arms smuggling.
88. Although some measures have already been taken to strengthen the regulatory framework around firearms and ammunitions, more needs to be done to significantly curb the illegal importation and possession of arms. As part of these efforts, on 15 February 2022, Haiti formally joined the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030 (Caribbean Firearms Roadmap), adopted by the CARICOM heads of State in 2019¹⁷. More recently, in August 2022, the Government finalized its National Action Plan, aimed at implementing this roadmap. This document must now be signed by the Prime Minister for its implementation.
89. Additionally, the Government adopted, in July 2021, a National Strategy on Disarmament, Dismantling, Reinsertion and Community Violence Reduction (SNDDR-CVR)¹⁸. This strategy is based on three pillars: (1) security, (2) community-based socio-economic development, and (3) protection. Under the protection pillar, the National Strategy places an emphasis on the importance of protecting communities, especially women and girls, against sexual violence through a series of actions aiming at protecting and accompanying victims of sexual and gender-based violence; enabling protection mechanisms at the community level; reducing the vulnerability of women and girls, and empowering their leadership; reshaping masculinities; and further developing citizen engagement and sensibilization.

VI. Conclusion and recommendations

90. For several years, alerts have been raised about the rise of armed violence in Haiti, in particular in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. Since mid-2021, this violence has reached unprecedented levels. New trends and patterns of human rights abuses have (re)emerged. Violence by gangs has increasingly been directed at the local population. Within these trends and patterns, sexual violence is used by gangs as a means to instill fear, punish, subjugate and inflict pain on local population.

¹⁷ The Caribbean Firearms Roadmap consolidates the political commitment made by Caribbean states to prevent and combat illicit firearms proliferation in the region. For more information, see: CARICOM (May 2019). “Roadmap for implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030”, available at: <https://unlirec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Info-Sheet-Roadmap-v12.pdf> (last seen: 8 September 2022)

¹⁸ Initially created on 28 August 2006, the presidential decree of 8 March 2019 reactivated the National Commission for Disarmament, Dismantlement and Reintegration (CNDDR), a structure responsible for coordinating and implementing the state policy on the disarmament and dismantlement of armed groups, and the reintegration of disarmed individuals.



91. Acts of rape, including collective rape, and other forms of sexual violence are part of the strategies used by Haitian gangs to wage their turf wars and expand their areas of influence. Women, girls, boys, and men have been affected. LGBTI+ persons, traditionally marginalized and rejected within the Haitian society, have also been particularly targeted for their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
92. Accounts from survivors, witnesses, social workers, medical practitioners and national authorities described time and again the devastating impacts of sexual violence, both physically and psychologically. To this must be added the challenges in accessing health care, psychosocial support and reinsertion programs tailored to Haiti's specific context.
93. Despite the fragile socio-economic and political situation, Haitian authorities have the duty to take appropriate measures to prevent sexual violence, and to ensure that survivors have access to comprehensive medical treatment, mental health and psychosocial care and legal support.
94. Additionally, medical and psychosocial service providers, in coordination with national authorities, and with the support of the international community, have to bolster and adjust their approach to respond to the needs and protect the rights of victims of sexual violence involving gangs. In this regard, the key recommendations identified in the course of this qualitative assessment should be implemented as a matter of urgency.
95. If not adequately and rapidly tackled, the use of sexual violence as a means to instill fear and control populations risks to further shatter the already extremely fragile social fabric of the Haitian society for the years to come and to undermine any prospects of sustainable development and lasting stability.
96. In light of the need to reinforce prevention and protection responses to sexual violence perpetrated by gangs, BINUH and OHCHR make the following recommendations following an approach based on response by sector:

Data deficit related to sexual violence

- ✓ To the United Nations system, establish dedicated capacity within BINUH to conduct analysis and report regularly on sexual violence involving armed gangs, as well as to support projects to prevent and address this type of sexual violence.
- ✓ To the United Nations system, civil society organizations and service providers, establish a mechanism for the collection of timely, accurate and reliable information on sexual violence in general, with a special focus of sexual violence perpetrated by gangs. This mechanism should include a wide variety of actors, including United Nations actors, national institutions including statistic entities, civil society organizations and service providers, with a view to assess trends and patterns, develop early warning indicators, identify hotspots, and devise coordinated policies and programmatic survivor-centered responses.
- ✓ To the United Nations, ensure that the United Nations Security Council keeps a dedicated focus on sexual violence perpetrated by gangs in Haiti, including through



BINUH regular reports and updates, as appropriate, and through regular information sharing with OHCHR and with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Informal Experts Group on Women and Peace and Security.

Sensitization and awareness raising in gang violence related contexts

- ✓ To public, private and non-governmental service providers and to civil society organizations, with the support of the United Nations, develop awareness campaigns and other sensitizations measures to stop sexual violence used by armed gangs as a means to instill fear in the population.
- ✓ To civil society organizations with the support of the United Nations (through Women Protection Advisors), provide specialized sensitization training to community-based actors, including foundations and other local associations, located in, or with access to, hard-to-access areas with the highest prevalence of gang-related incidents with the aim of sensitizing gang elements to the impact of sexual violence.

Referral pathways

- ✓ To national authorities with the support of United Nations, reinforce the coordination between humanitarian interventions and development programs for victims of sexual violence in gang affected areas, with a view to providing holistic victim-centered responses encompassing medical and psychological support, legal, and socio-economic services, and reintegration support.

Access to and availability of medical care for victims of sexual violence linked to gangs

- ✓ To service providers in coordination with national authorities with the support of the United Nations, develop and/or strengthen the synergy and training of community workers ("first responders"), who are often the only ones able to access gang-controlled areas, to facilitate the rapid identification and referral of victims of sexual violence to the relevant services.
- ✓ To service providers, strengthen the capacity of mobile clinics and other flexible medical care programs for the decentralization of healthcare services aimed at offering medical and psychosocial outreach care, especially for victims who live in places where freedom of movement is limited.
- ✓ To service providers, in coordination with national authorities and with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors, strengthen the availability, accessibility, and quality of medical and psychosocial care facilities for survivors of sexual violence linked to gangs, including through increased and sustained funding and support for organizations that provide medical and psychological care to victims.
- ✓ To service providers in coordination with national authorities, facilitate specialized training to healthcare providers on the management of cases of sexual violence, including the treatment of medically complex cases requiring surgical intervention and the provision of sexual and reproductive health care services.



Mental health and psychosocial care for victims of sexual violence

- ✓ To service providers in coordination with national authorities, bolster the national capacity of psychological services, including within universities, with dedicated expertise related to sexual violence linked to armed gangs.
- ✓ To service providers in coordination with national authorities, provide training on mental health care to social workers and healthcare providers dealing with survivors of sexual violence involving gangs with associated psychological trauma.
- ✓ To service providers, with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors, prioritize support for accessible and inclusive shelter programs that include reinsertion options for survivors. Ensure in this regard that rapid and flexible financing is available to implementing partners.

Rule of Law Institutions

- ✓ To the Haitian National Police, with the support of the United Nations, strengthen coordination efforts among specialized units within the Haitian National Police working on sexual violence, protection of minors and kidnappings, through the establishment of a coordination mechanism, and joint training and investigations.
- ✓ To national authorities, increase advisory, technical and operational support to the Haitian National Police, including training on human rights law and standards as well as a gender and age-sensitive victim-centered approach, to avoid human rights abuses and violations by police officers in the exercise of their work.
- ✓ To the Haitian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, with the support of the international community, establish a judicial task force to address impunity for crimes of sexual violence.
- ✓ To national authorities, with the assistance of countries in the region, support law enforcement authorities to tackle the smuggling and uncontrolled circulation of illicit weapons and ammunition, as these are one of the main enablers of gang violence, including sexual violence.
- ✓ To national authorities with the support of the United Nations, strengthen and speed up the efforts to implement Haiti's National Action Plan aimed at implementing CARICOM's Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030; as well as the National Strategy on Disarmament, Dismantling, Reinsertion and Community Violence Reduction (SNDDR-CVR).



VII. Appendix: Legal Framework

1. Two legal frameworks apply to address sexual violence and other related human rights abuses committed by armed gangs in Haiti. The first concerns Haitian law and the second, international human rights norms and standards.

Haitian Law

2. According to article 19 of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of Haiti, "The State has the imperative obligation to guarantee the right to life, to health, to respect for the human person, to all citizens without distinction, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".
3. Title II of the Haitian Penal Code protects the rights to life, and to physical, mental and moral integrity, as well as the right to property of all persons. Killing, assassination, injury, rape, kidnapping and theft or destruction of property are classified as crimes. The penalty for these crimes is forced labor for life. However, the code specifies that those sentenced to hard labor will be employed in public works. In practice, the penalty of public works was replaced by life imprisonment after the end of the Duvalier regime in 1986.
4. In particular, articles 278, 279 and 281 of the Haitian Penal Code establish that whoever commits the crime of rape, whoever is found guilty of any other sexual assault, committed or attempted with violence, threats, surprise or psychological pressure against the person of either sex, or whoever encourages prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, shall be punished with imprisonment from six months to life.

International Human Rights Law

5. Haiti ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1972; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1991; the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2013. According to the provisions of article 276 of the Constitution of the Republic of Haiti, international treaties or agreements, once sanctioned and ratified in the form provided for by the Constitution, form part of the country's legislation.
6. At the regional level, Haiti also ratified the American Convention on Human Rights in 1977, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) in 1997, and the Statute of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 1998. The latter has jurisdiction in all cases concerning the interpretation or application of the American Convention on Human Rights.
7. In particular, articles 4, 5, 7 and 11 of the American Convention on Human Rights recognize the inherent right of all persons to life, physical and moral integrity, personal liberty, and honor and dignity. Articles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Convention of Belém do Pará reaffirm the right of all women to the recognition, enjoyment, exercise and protection of their rights, including their right to have their lives and their physical, mental and moral



integrity respected, to which end the signatory states undertake to adopt all appropriate means to prevent, punish and eradicate all forms of violence against women.

8. Under this international human rights law framework, Haiti is legally bound to respect, protect, promote and fulfill the human rights of all persons within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction.
9. Therefore, Haiti has the obligation to prevent all acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abduction as well as to take effective measures to promptly investigate violations and abuses of international law and hold accountable those responsible for these acts.

Right to health

10. The human right to health is recognized in numerous international instruments. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and of their family. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires the elimination of discrimination against women in health care, as well as guarantees of equal access for women and men to health care services. It also requires States Parties to enact and enforce laws and policies that protect women and girls from violence and abuse, and to provide for appropriate physical and mental health services.
11. According to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, States Parties should allocate adequate resources and adopt effective measures to ensure that victims of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, have access to comprehensive medical treatment, mental health care and psychosocial support. In the same vain, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, requires States Parties to strive to ensure that no child is deprived of their right of access to health care.
12. As the realization of the right to health is progressive, international human rights law provides that States shall take steps, to the maximum of their available resources, to progressively achieve the full realization of the right to health, and therefore acknowledges constraints that may arise from a lack of available resources.
13. However, while recognizing these constraints, international human rights law also imposes on States various obligations, which are of immediate effect, such as to guarantee the right to health without discrimination of any kind and to take the necessary steps towards the full realization of this right.
14. If resource constraints render it impossible for a State to comply fully with its obligations under the right to health, it has the burden of justifying that every effort has nevertheless been made to use all available resources at its disposal in order to satisfy, as a matter of priority, these obligations.
15. Despite its fragile economic situation, Haiti is not exempted from taking all necessary steps to ensure the realization of a minimum core content obligations of the right to health which include, *inter alia*, the right of access to functioning health facilities, goods and services on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups; to



provide essential drugs and to ensure equitable distribution of all health facilities, goods and services

16. To reduce inequalities in accessing health care between and within countries, States Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are advised, depending on the availability of resources, to facilitate access to essential health facilities, goods and services in other countries, wherever possible and to provide the necessary aid when required, individually and through international assistance and cooperation.

AMERICAS

August 2022

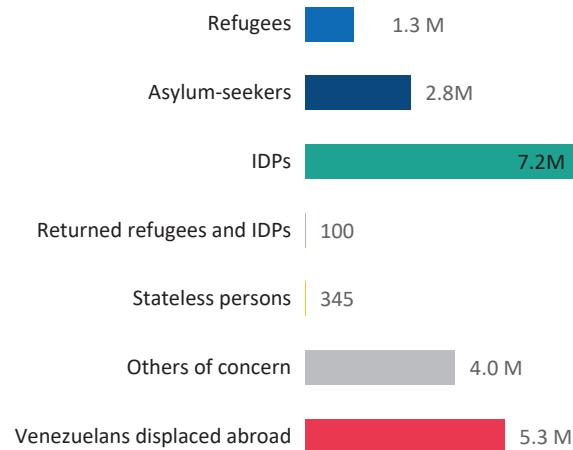
One in five people of concern to UNHCR lives in the Americas. The complexity of **mixed movements** has increased. Refugees and migrants continue to face protection risks along displacement routes.

UNHCR is further strengthening its catalytic role in mobilizing a wide range of stakeholders, including **development banks** to collaborate in different displacement situations.

In the Americas, UNHCR prioritizes **protection interventions**, **humanitarian aid** as well as **long-term solutions, including integration**.

REVISED PROJECTION OF POPULATION OF CONCERN IN 2022

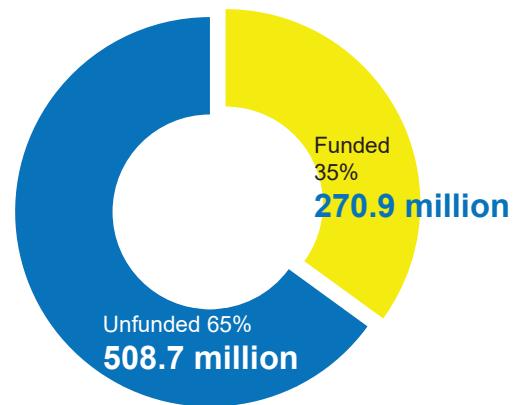
20.6 million people of concern | 17.9% of global total



FUNDING (AS OF 9 AUGUST 2022)

USD 779.6 million

requested for the Americas in 2022



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

1,942 National Staff
 509 International Staff
 60,47% Women and 39,53% Men

Offices:

1 Regional Bureau in Panama
 3 Multi-Country Offices in Argentina, Panama and US
 11 Country Offices
 1 Country Mission in Dominican Republic
 5 National Offices
 22 Field Offices
 10 Sub Offices
 46 Field Units



Panama. Refugees and migrants brave hazardous jungles of Darien Gap on their way north © UNHCR/ Nicolo Filippo Rosso

Operational context

The **Americas** region is facing a forced displacement crisis that is unprecedented both in its complexity and scale. By August 2022, around [18 per cent of the population that UNHCR serves worldwide](#), or over 20.6 million people, are projected to be displaced in the region by the end of 2022.

The exodus from the Bolivarian Republic of **Venezuela** remains one of the largest external displacement crises globally with over [6.1 million refugees and migrants](#), out of which over 80 per cent are hosted in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The volume and complexity of the [mixed population movements](#) across Latin America and the Caribbean have increased, involving people of various nationalities, many of whom had previously achieved a certain level of stability in countries in South America.

By the end of 2021, over 100,000 Haitians, who had been previously residing mainly in Chile and Brazil, and some 66,588 Cubans, had crossed the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama and moved across Central America, undertaking perilous journeys with the objective of reaching the US. So far this year, over 71,000 people, mostly Venezuelans, have taken the same dangerous route.

Other persons we serve include around [7.2 million IDPs](#) in **Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras**, and some [175,000 refugees and asylum seekers](#) from **Nicaragua** in Central America.

The [COVID-19](#) pandemic intensified deep-rooted inequalities in the region, dealing a disproportionate blow to displaced populations.

Coordination and Partnerships

- Prioritisation of life-saving assistance goes hand in hand with efforts to find long-term solutions by fostering cooperation with a wide array of actors, such as [local authorities](#) and the [private sector](#), including to provide livelihood opportunities and promote inclusion into national systems.
- UNHCR also partners with [beneficiaries, the public sector, NGOs and civil society organizations](#) in their operations across the Americas, contributing to the whole-of-society approach in the refugee response, and in line with the [UN Global Compact on Refugees](#).
- UNHCR co-leads with IOM the [interagency response](#) to the situation of the Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela to implement the [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#) across 17 countries. Both agencies also provide technical support to Governmental coordination in the [Quito Process](#)—an initiative including several [Latin American countries](#) that seeks to harmonize domestic policies in receiving countries.
- On 3 December 2021, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the [Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\)](#) and launched a new 3-year project with the [World Bank \(WB\)](#) to produce regularly statistics about the IDP population in Honduras, with funds from the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement. In 2022, UNHCR is strengthening its collaboration with the international banks.
- In **Central America and Mexico**, UNHCR supports the implementation of national plans under the [Regional Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Framework for Central America and Mexico \(MIRPS\)](#). In addition, the agency works with the [Organization of](#)

[American States \(OAS\)](#) to expand the [MIRPS Support Platform](#). Member states have reaffirmed their political commitment through the revision of the plans and Support Platform members (led by Canada as current Chair) have increased their support through technical, material and financial assistance.

- Since 2019, UNHCR works within the framework of the [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#) for people who spontaneously returned to **Venezuela**, IDPs, persons at risk of displacement, refugees, asylum-seekers, and persons at risk of statelessness who require humanitarian assistance and protection safeguards.
- Since 2021, UNHCR works with other UN agencies, actors and stakeholders within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for people with protection needs in [El Salvador](#), [Guatemala](#) and [Honduras](#). The UN estimates that 8.3 million people across the three countries require humanitarian assistance, compared to the 5.2 million in early 2020. UNHCR also contributes to inter-agency structures and UN Bodies and Regional Fora for joint responses, monitoring and advocacy, and investment in national and regional protection networks.
- UNHCR in the Americas works in Spanish, Portuguese, French and English with over 275 partnership agreements, including local and international NGOs, governments and other partners. 70% of partner agreements in the Americas are with local NGOs.

Strategy

Protect

Assert the centrality of protection in response to displacement

- UNHCR works with States to strengthen **asylum capacities and digitalize its systems** and promote protection-sensitive alternative arrangements through training and capacity-building of government officials.
- UNHCR supports States in terms of assistance to persons with specific needs, **registration**, and links with the national protection services, which also help UNHCR identify and assist the most vulnerable.
- Investing in **protection monitoring**, evidence-based programming and analysis is at the core of regional strategies oriented by age, gender, and diversity considerations, ensuring protection from exploitation and abuse.
- Through a strengthened network of **support spaces**, the provision of information and orientation, identification and secure reference, helps to prevent displacement.

Assist

Ensure operational response capacities and life-saving aid for the most vulnerable during emergencies

- Across the region, UNHCR responds to the **immediate needs** of increasing numbers of persons that UNHCR serves. Because of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, rising poverty and inequality triggered unprecedented levels of need for **basic relief items, emergency shelter, food, safe water, and sanitation supplies**.
- **Cash assistance** has proven the preferred option for refugees and other people forced to flee to meet basic needs such as food, rent or medicines.
- As severe **climate events** further aggravate the situation of displaced populations and communities at risk of displacement, UNHCR responds with **emergency relief items** to support authorities' response to these situations.

Empower

Empower communities and achieve gender equality

- To prevent displacement, mitigate protection risks and build on the resilience of affected communities, operations will prioritise **community-centred interventions**, including supporting volunteer networks in prioritised communities. UNHCR promotes communication and integration,

Solve	identification, and referral of cases with specific needs, as well as enhanced access to information and complaint mechanisms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR will boost feedback and complaint mechanisms across the region, allowing for constant communication with the affected population and strengthening two-way communication, to ensure the response adapts to their needs, particularly in increasingly risky environments such as borders. <p>Include persons we serve in national/local services with development support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Through a whole-of-society approach, UNHCR fosters partnerships to mobilise support for the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national systems and the labour market. ■ UNHCR actively advocates for enhanced national efforts to provide regular stay (such as temporary or permanent schemes, professional or work-related permits, education programmes...) allowing for full enjoyment of rights and integration.
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Climate-induced risks

One of the greatest threats of our time is climate change. Hurricanes, storms, floods and droughts will continue to disproportionately affect the region and lead to further displacement. The impacts exacerbate existing inequalities between men and women and affect access to resources in areas vulnerable to droughts and floods. For this reason, UNHCR will move forward with the formulation and implementation of its regional climate action plan in collaboration with operational departments and in line with [UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Climate Action](#).

Priority areas in this regard include providing legal and policy guidance and support, conducting evidence-based advocacy in the context of climate change and disaster-induced displacement. Increased resilience and protection of the most vulnerable and their hosts to climate change impacts will be promoted. To this end, mitigation of climate risks and adaptation of mechanisms for operational response to displacement in the context of climate change will be undertaken. In addition, UNHCR's efforts to reduce its own environmental footprint will be increased.

To support an evidence-based operational engagement and response to forced displacement associated with climate change and natural hazards, as well as to advance on the implementation of UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action, the Regional Bureau for the Americas is currently working with the University of Peace and the Latin American Observatory on Human Mobility, Climate Change and Disaster to conduct a research to assess the impact of climate change on displacement within and across El Salvador and Honduras.

Timely funding

In **2022**, UNHCR in the Americas requires **\$779.6 million** to respond to the needs of millions of refugees and others seeking safety and dignified lives. **Timely funding** is urgent to ensure the continuity of life-saving activities in the region: unrestricted **cash assistance**; distribution of **core and hygiene items**; provision of **emergency shelter** in border areas and for those facing evictions, and support to States for **regularisation** and documentation.

UNHCR's humanitarian and longer-term response in the Americas is made possible thanks to the **generous support** of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in the Americas.

Thanks to **all our donors in 2022** (as of 9 August)

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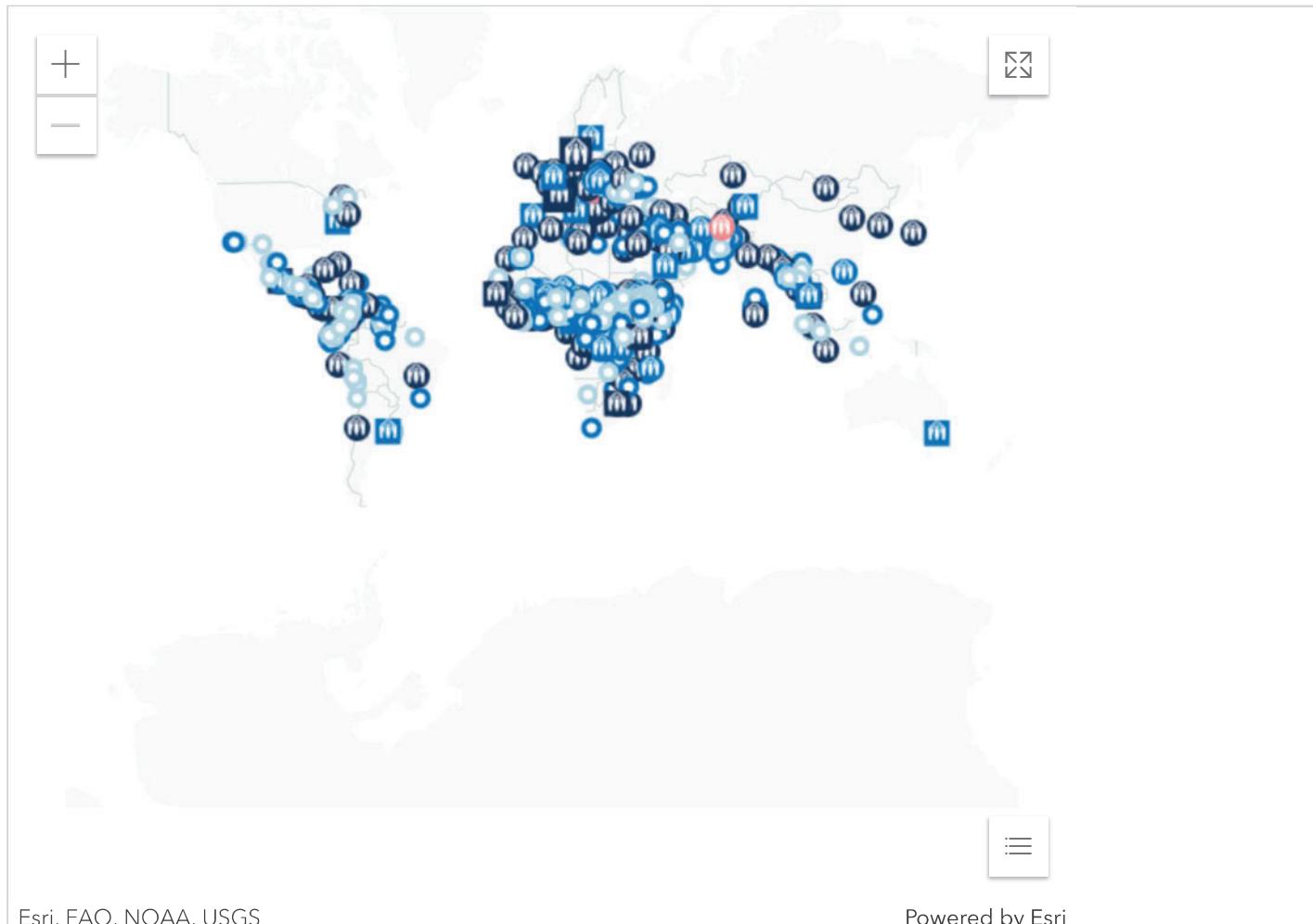
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Populations

Financials

Map



Esri, FAO, NOAA, USGS

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‘Catastrophic’ hunger recorded in Haiti for first time, UN warns



© UNFPA/Ralph Tedy Erol | Mothers wait with their children to be vaccinated at a UNFPA-supported hospital in southern Haiti.

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An unrelenting series of crises has trapped vulnerable Haitians in a cycle of growing desperation, without access to food, fuel, markets, jobs and public services, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Friday.

Hunger has reached a catastrophic level - the highest level 5, on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification index, or IPC) - in the capital's Cité Soleil neighbourhood.

World Food Programme 
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#Haiti: As crises collide, WFP is committed to continuing to support vulnerable Haitians amidst multiple security challenges.

Working with Haitians to boost their resilience to future shocks remains WFP's top priority in the country.

[Watch on Twitter](#)

According to the latest IPC analysis, a record 4.7 million people are currently facing acute hunger (IPC 3 and above), including 1.8 million people in *Emergency* phase (IPC 4) and, **for the first time ever in Haiti**, 19,000 people are in *Catastrophe* phase, phase 5.

Haiti AR_001947

Welcome to the United Nations

Increased violence, with armed groups vying for control of the vast and now lawless area of Port-au-Prince, has meant that residents have lost access to their work, markets and health and nutrition services. Many have been forced to flee or just hide indoors.

Rural insecurity

Food security has also continued to deteriorate in rural areas, with several going from *Crisis* to *Emergency* levels.

Harvest losses due to below average rainfall and the 2021 earthquake that devastated parts of the Grand'Anse, Nippes and Sud departments, are among the other devastating factors, beyond the political and economic crisis.

"WFP stands with the people of Haiti - serving the vulnerable and helping the poorest. We are here to ensure schoolchildren get a nutritious meal each day, families meet their basic food needs and communities are empowered," said Jean-Martin Bauer, WFP Country Director in Haiti.

'Time of tumult'

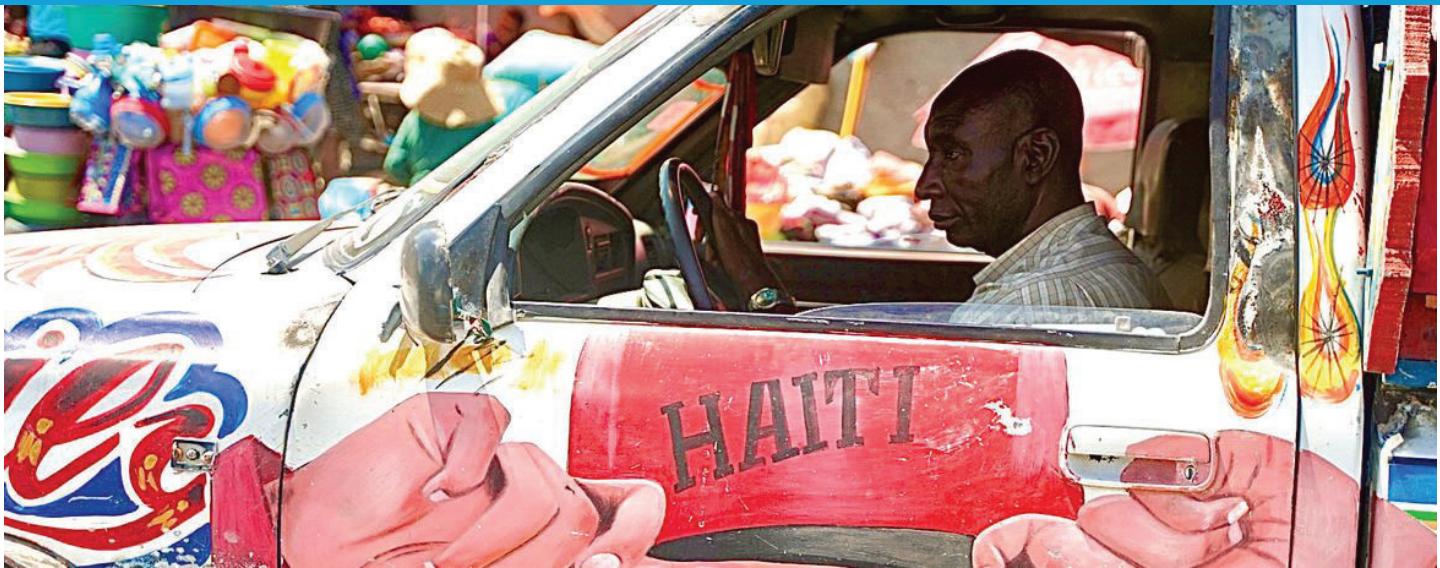
"This is a time of tumult in Haiti. But there is a way forward. We all need to be steadfast and focus on delivering urgent humanitarian assistance and supporting long-term development."

"We need to help Haitians produce **better, more nutritious food to safeguard their livelihoods and their futures**, especially in the context of a worsening food crisis," said José Luis Fernández Filgueiras, **FAO** Representative in Haiti. "Resource mobilization efforts must be scaled up in order to strengthen the resilience of households targeted by emergency food assistance to increase their self-reliance."

For years, natural hazards and political turmoil have taken a toll on Haitians who were already in need in both rural and urban areas. The onset of the global food crisis, with rising food and fuel prices, has led to growing civil unrest that has plunged Haiti into chaos, completely paralyzing economic activities and transport.

The basic food basket is out of reach for many Haitians. Inflation stands at a staggering 33 percent and the cost of petrol has doubled.

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UNDP Haiti/Borja Lopetegui Gonzalez | Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

Delivering solutions

Despite the volatile security situation in the capital, Port-au-Prince, WFP provided **more than 100,000 people with emergency assistance** in the metropolitan area in 2022. WFP's focus remains on strengthening national social protection and food systems that are central to the country's recovery efforts and long-term development.

Over the next six months, **WFP requires US\$ 105 million for crisis response** and to tackle root causes and bolster the resilience of Haitian.

FAO has been providing emergency livelihoods support to small-scale vulnerable farming households. During the autumn agricultural season starting this month, **FAO aims to reach close to 70,000 people** with cash for work, food crop production assistance, goat and poultry breeding assistance, and food storage and processing support for school feeding programmes. FAO urgently **requires some \$33 million** to assist more than 470,000 of the most vulnerable people.

While the agencies continue operating in Haiti as the security situation allows, increased insecurity, violence and lack of fuel are hampering humanitarian operations which are critical for the most vulnerable Haitians.

Cholera, near 'death sentence'

And, nearly 100,000 children under the age of five who are already suffering from severe acute malnutrition -also known as severe wasting - are especially vulnerable to the ongoing cholera outbreak affecting Haiti, **UNICEF** has warned.

Haiti AR_001949

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cholera, further reinforcing the need for urgent action to contain the disease.

Since cholera was first reported on 2 October 2022, there have been 357 suspected cases with more than half of these in children under 14.



© UNICEF/Jonathan Crickx | People queue to receive hygiene kits in Les Cayes, southwest of Haiti.

Children aged between one and four years are at the greatest risk.

"The crisis in Haiti is increasingly a children's crisis," said Bruno Maes, UNICEF Representative in Haiti. "One in three of those suffering from cholera is under the age of five.

"For children who are already weak from a lack of nutritious food, catching cholera, and suffering the effects, including diarrhoea and vomiting, is **close to a death sentence**. They must be identified and treated urgently, and concrete measures must be taken to prevent new cholera cases in the communities."

In Cité Soleil, where the first cholera case was reported, up to 8,000 under-fives are at risk of dying of concurrent malnutrition, wasting in this case, and cholera unless urgent action is taken to contain this threat.

Health system decimated

The health system has been brought to its knees in Haiti following the gang blockade of the country's principal fuel terminal.

Haiti AR_001950

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only three ambulances functioning in Port-au-Prince – with close to none running across the rest of the country.

Vulnerable populations, including pregnant women and girls, are the most impacted by restricted access to health services.

Gangs use sexual violence to instill fear, and alarmingly the number of cases increases by the day

UNFPA , the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency, estimates that close to 30,000 pregnant women are at risk of being unable to access essential healthcare, and almost 10,000 could experience life-threatening – if not fatal – obstetric complications without skilled medical assistance. Around 7,000 survivors of sexual violence could be left without medical and psychosocial support by the end of the year.

Aid for displaced

“Despite the extremely challenging security situation and fuel shortages, UNFPA and our partners **are operating mobile clinics** frequently in internally displaced persons sites around Port-au-Prince,” said Saïdou Kaboré, UNFPA Representative in Haiti.

“Our trained community workers are doing all they can to ensure that women and girls, especially pregnant women and survivors of violence, can **access services and support that are critical to their health and survival.**”

Raped in front of their children

Also on Friday, the UN human rights office OHCHR , revealed in a highly disturbing report from Haiti, that children as young as 10, as well as elderly women, have been subjected to appalling sexual violence – **including collective rapes for hours in front of their parents or children, by more than half a dozen armed elements** – amid an explosion of gang violence in Port-au-Prince.

The report, titled *Sexual violence in Port-au-Prince: a weapon used by gangs to instill fear*, was jointly published by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and OHCHR.

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Rights Chief said.

"The gruesome testimonies shared by victims underscore the imperative for urgent action to stop this depraved behaviour, **ensure that those responsible are held to account, and the victims are provided support.**"

The report painstakingly documents sexual crimes perpetrated against women, girls and boys of all ages - and to a lesser extent men - by gangs waging their turf wars and seeking to expand their areas of influence. LGBTI+ people have also been targeted.

Armed gangs have used rape and collective rapes to instill fear, punish, subjugate, and inflict pain on local populations, the report stated.

Viewed as sexual objects, women, girls, and sometimes men, are also coerced into becoming the "partners" of armed elements, in gang strongholds. Refusing such sexual demands can lead to reprisals including killing and arson attacks.

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Haiti AR_001953

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13 October 2022 | Humanitarian Aid

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UN chief calls for 'enhanced security support' for Haiti, as crisis worsens; cholera deaths mount

10 October 2022 | Peace and Security

Amid a deteriorating security situation in Haiti, UN Security-General António Guterres [called on Sunday for](#) the Security Council to consider deploying armed forces to help the country address immense humanitarian concerns.

Haiti AR_001954

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Security Council urged to act in face of 'humanitarian catastrophe' in Haiti



UNDP Haiti/Borja Lopetegui Gonzalez | Gang violence in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, is terrorizing adults and children alike.

Welcome to the United Nations

The Security Council must act urgently to support Haiti as the gang, economic, and fuel supply crises there “intersect in altogether new and frightening ways”, the head of the UN Mission in the country, BINUH, said on Monday.

Meanwhile, political stakeholders are still struggling to find common ground and define a path to elections against this backdrop, she added.

UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 

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Briefing the [@UN](#) Security Council today on recent developments in [#Haiti](#), SRSG and [@BINUH_UN](#) head Helen La Lime said that “an economic crisis, a gang crisis, and a political crisis have converged into a humanitarian catastrophe.” media.un.org/en/asset/k12/k...

4:48 PM · Sep 26, 2022



Haitian-led solution critical

“An economic crisis, a gang crisis, and a political crisis have converged into a humanitarian catastrophe. We must not lose hope, but rather combine our efforts to **find a pathway to a better tomorrow**,” said UN Special Representative Helen La Lime, speaking from the capital Port-au-Prince.

“A Haitian-led political solution is the first necessary step to address the current crisis. To support Haitians in their effort towards a better future, this Council must take urgent action.”

Haiti AR_001958

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More than 1 million affected

The UN estimates that at least 1.5 million people in the Caribbean country have been directly impacted by recent unrest, with **gender-based violence**, and in particular rape, being used systematically.

The economic crisis has caused food prices to soar, while fuel is often available only on the black market.

Protests broke out in Haiti after the Prime Minister announced on 11 September that the Government will reduce some \$400 million in fuel subsidies in efforts to increase revenue for social programmes.

By the following day, barricades had been erected throughout the country, prompting a nationwide shutdown, with the situation persisting in the capital for a full five days.

One of the largest gang alliances also blocked the main fuel terminal there on 12 September. The siege lasted for over a week, despite concerted operations by the police over the weekend.

Good offices role

On the political front, Ms. La Lime said she has maintained good relations with all sectors of society and has encouraged dialogue.

"While so-far inconclusive efforts have led to a perceived stalemate, national stakeholders have begun to re-engage with a renewed sense of urgency. In the past weeks, Government representatives, political groups, and civil society organizations launched new consultations on ways to forge a wider consensus on a path to elections. But we're not there yet," she said.

Aid delivery hampered

The insecurity has also severely curtailed humanitarian access and made it "very difficult and dangerous" to deliver, according to Valerie N. Guarnieri, Deputy Executive Director at the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)).

"We expect **food security to further deteriorate** this year, surpassing the record high of 4.5 million people estimated to face crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity, including 1.3 million people in emergency," she said.

Welcome to the United Nations

Protesters have also **ransacked and looted humanitarian warehouses**, with WFP losing one-third of its food stocks in just one week. UN agencies and partners estimate they have lost some \$6 million during such attacks, which come at the peak of the hurricane season.

Appeal for support

Ms. Guarnieri stressed that WFP and other aid agencies intend to stay and deliver in Haiti despite the challenges, but will need greater assistance.

"Simply put, **we're not in a position to support all of those that need our help** due to the general lawlessness and operational environment," she said.

"Therefore, we're looking forward to increased support from the Member States, from you, to further facilitate humanitarian access as well as protection of humanitarian actors, personnel and assets."

Fighting illicit trafficking

The armed groups not only compromise stability and security, they also hamper efforts towards peace and lasting development, said Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes (**UNODC**).

Haiti is particularly vulnerable to the illicit traffic in commodities, particularly **drugs, firearms and ammunition**, due to its 1,500 kilometres of coastline and land border with the Dominican Republic.

Ms. Waly said UNODC is supporting border management and is working to map out transnational criminal activities in Haiti, as well as their regional impact.

They are also assisting the authorities in building capacity to inspect containers at strategic points such as ports and border crossings.

"These efforts should ensure that customs revenue be effectively sent to activities to support border modernization and border management," she said, speaking in French.

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HAITI

MID-OCT 2022 – MID-APR 2023

ISSUED 11 NOV 2022

On 2 October 2022, national authorities reported the first two confirmed cases of *Vibrio cholerae* in the Port-au-Prince area. As of 10 November, the Ministry of Public Health and Population (Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population, MSPP per its French acronym) reported 7,212 suspected cases, 700 confirmed cases and 142 deaths across the country. Over 6,315 patients are currently hospitalized in cholera treatment centers. The country is experiencing a cholera outbreak with a 72% increase in suspected cases between 3 and 11 November.

As the affected people rises, there are fears that the disease will spread rapidly to other urban centers in the country. According to PAHO/WHO, between 300,000 and 500,000 people are at risk of contracting the disease and nearly 40% of suspected cases are children under 15 years of age.

The situation is very concerning as the resurgence of cholera is occurring in a complex socio-political context added to a security and humanitarian crises that have paralyzed the country since September 2022. Indeed, the blockade of the main oil terminal has critically restricted the functioning of basic services such as electricity, water distribution, health centers and telecommunications among others.

Moreover, the country is experiencing a severe food crisis. According to the latest analysis of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) published in October 2022, 4.7 million people, almost half of the population is experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, with 19,200 of these people in the disaster category (IPC Phase 5).

The objective of this Flash Appeal is to provide rapid financial support to contain the spread of cholera in Haiti, through WASH and health activities, while responding to humanitarian needs, particularly in the areas of food security, nutrition, protection and nutrition, in the most affected areas. Fundings will also be allocated to support the logistical capacities of humanitarian partners and to strengthen the population's access to basic services. In total, the response strategy targets 1.4 million of the 1.6 million people in need for a financial requirement of \$145.6 million.



PEOPLE IN NEED

1.6M



PEOPLE TARGETED

1.4M

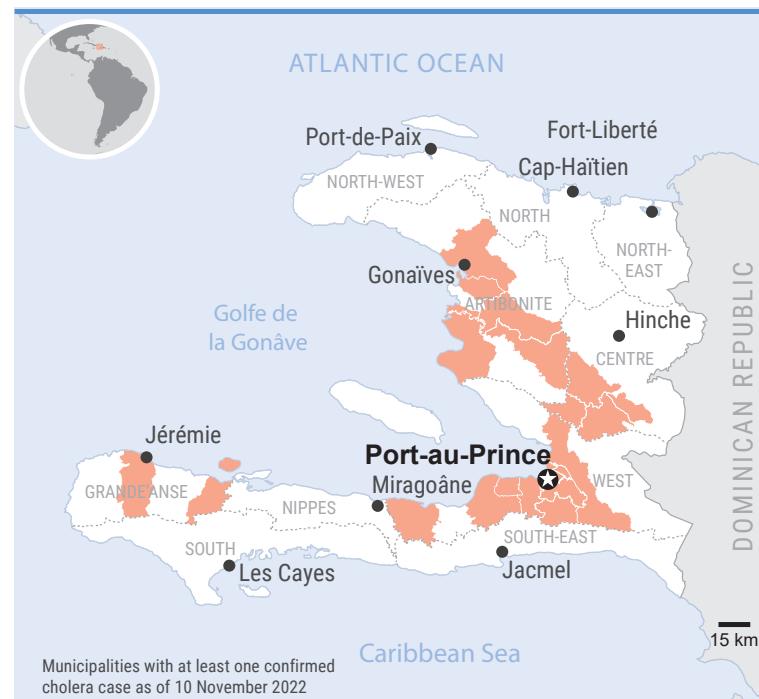


REQUIREMENTS (US\$)

\$145.6M

	WASH	1.6M	1.4M	\$18.5M
	Food Security & Agriculture	1.5M	568k	\$71.9
	Health	1.0M	600k	\$24.1M
	Protection	100k	64k	\$9.6M
	Nutrition	60k	20k	\$2.6M
	Logistics			\$18.9M

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Sources: DELR/MSPP

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



Contain cholera morbidity and mortality in affected communities through a rapid case detection and investigation, early case management and interrupting transmission within communities, including by improving access to safe drinking water and hygiene and sanitation services.



Respond to the basic food and nutrition needs of the populations affected by the multiple crises in Haiti with a priority given to those in cholera-affected areas.



Ensure a rapid access to an appropriate, quality, gender-, age- and disability-sensitive protection service to men, women and children affected by the crises and at risk from the cholera epidemic.



Ensure access to humanitarian actors and service providers to deliver an effective and coordinated response in accordance with humanitarian principles to the affected populations.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-28/5-dead-66-migrants-rescued-from-waters-near-puerto-rico>



5 Dead, 68 Haitians Rescued From Waters Near Puerto Rico

Authorities say at least five Haitian migrants have drowned and 68 others have been rescued after a suspected human smuggling boat dropped the group off in waters near an uninhabited island west of Puerto Rico.

By [Associated Press](#)

|

July 28, 2022, at 10:42 p.m.

5 Dead, 68 Haitians Rescued From Waters Near Puerto Rico

More



Rescued migrants walk on the shore off Mona Island, west of Puerto Rico, Thursday, July 28, 2022. At least five migrants drowned and dozens others were rescued Thursday after a suspected

human smuggling boat dropped the group off in waters near the uninhabited island west of Puerto Rico, officials said. (Puerto Rico's Department of Natural Resources via AP) The Associated Press

By DÁNICA COTO, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — At least five Haitian migrants drowned and 68 others were rescued Thursday after a suspected human smuggling boat dropped the group off in waters near an uninhabited island west of Puerto Rico, officials said.

The incident is the latest in a string of deadly voyages across the northern Caribbean carrying mostly Haitian migrants fleeing their country amid a deepening political and economic crisis and a spike in gang-related killings and kidnappings.

Federal and local authorities searched the area near Mona Island for several hours after receiving a call from rangers with Puerto Rico's Department of Natural Resources who first spotted the migrants. Officials determined that no additional people were missing, based on interviews with survivors, U.S. Coast Guard spokesman Ricardo Castrodad told The Associated Press.

He said 41 men, 25 women and two children survived, adding that none had any urgent medical issues.

Jeffrey Quiñones, spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, said all migrants aboard the boat were Haitians.

Most human smuggling boats that carry Haitian migrants to Puerto Rico depart from the neighboring Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. Some capsize in the treacherous Mona Passage that separates the two islands while other boats drop off migrants in tiny uninhabited islands before reaching Puerto Rico.

In this case, the boat carrying the migrants fled the scene, Castrodad said.

The rescue comes just days after authorities in the Bahamas recovered the bodies of 17 migrants and rescued 25 more after their boat capsized early Sunday. A criminal investigation is underway.

In May, 11 Haitian women drowned and 38 others were saved after their boat sank near Puerto Rico.

“This is happening every day,” Castrodad said. “Everyone runs the same risk and same danger.”

A growing number of Haitians are fleeing their country as gangs grow more powerful following the July 7, 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. This week alone, authorities blamed gangs for setting a courthouse and a church on fire as turf wars in the capital of Port-au-Prince intensify. In addition, more than 470 people have been killed, injured or disappeared in less than a week amid gang fights in the nearby Cite Soleil slum, according to the United Nations.

The French medical charity Doctors Without Borders issued a statement on Thursday saying it has seen a “significant increase” in the number of victims hit by stray bullets. One of its emergency centers tended to nearly 80 bullet wounds, the majority of them stray bullets, the organization said, adding that many residents are trapped at home and unable to leave because of the escalating violence as their bullet wounds fester.

“In some of these areas, (the agency) can only treat patients in basements or windowless rooms, due to the danger of crossfire and stray bullets,” the medical charity said.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/27/us/capsized-boat-search-suspended.html>

Coast Guard Ends Search After Finding Bodies of 5 Migrants From Capsized Boat

More than 30 people remained unaccounted for after the boat that was carrying them overturned off Florida's Atlantic Coast last weekend, the authorities said.

•
• • •



“It does mean that we don’t think it’s likely that anyone else has survived,” Capt. Jo-Ann F. Burdian of the U.S. Coast Guard said Thursday. Credit...Chandan Khanna/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images



By [Neil Vigdor](#)

Jan. 27, 2022

The Coast Guard said on Thursday that it had recovered the bodies of five migrants from a suspected human smuggling boat that capsized last weekend off the coast of Florida, but that it would suspend its search for the more than 30 passengers who were still missing.

At a [news conference](#) in Miami Beach, Fla., officials said that four of the five bodies had been found in the past day as crews searched the northern Florida Straits and that only one survivor had been located earlier in the week.

Absent the emergence of additional information that could help Coast Guard crews narrow the search field, those in charge of the effort said that they had no choice but to make the difficult decision to call off the search.

Capt. Jo-Ann F. Burdian, the commander of the Coast Guard's Miami sector, said that the search would end at sunset on Thursday.

"It does mean that we don't think it's likely that anyone else has survived," Captain Burdian said.

She emphasized: "Now that does not mean the Coast Guard is closing this case. What that means is we won't be dedicating assets specifically to this search."

The 25-foot boat had left Bimini, in the Bahamas, on Saturday night, but encountered severe weather as it approached the Florida coast, overturning about 45 miles east of the Fort Pierce Inlet, according to the Coast Guard.

About two days passed before rescuers learned of the maritime disaster, which underscored the [dangers associated with the prevalence of seaborne migration](#) — and the desperation of those reliant on often overcrowded and flimsy boats. No one on the boat was wearing a life jacket, the authorities said.

Anthony Salisbury, a special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Miami, said at the news conference that a criminal investigation was continuing into the human smuggling operation connected to the boat.

“The goal of this investigation is to identify, arrest and prosecute any criminal or criminal organization that organized, facilitated or profited from this doomed venture,” Agent Salisbury said.

Agent Salisbury urged anyone with information about the human smuggling operation or anyone who might have had a family member aboard the boat to contact federal investigators.

“So please help us bring criminals who prey on and victimize the vulnerable migrant community to justice,” he said. “We don’t want anybody doing this again to any more migrants. This is dangerous stuff.”

Rescuers learned of the capsized vessel on Tuesday morning, when a boater, who was described as a good Samaritan, found a man clinging to the boat’s hull, the Coast Guard said.

A [photo posted by the Coast Guard on Twitter](#) showed the man straddling the hull.

Captain Burdian said that three ships and eight aircraft had been used during the search.

“We have saturated the area over, and over and over again,” Captain Burdian said. “The weather is somewhat deteriorating.”

The search effort came after at least 31 people were rescued from the water last Friday when their boat capsized five miles west of Bimini, [according to the Coast Guard](#) and [the Royal Bahamas Defense Force](#).

[Dozens Are Reported Missing After Boat Capsizes Off Florida Coast](#)
[Jan. 25, 2022](#)

[A Surge at Sea: Migrants Seek Entry to the U.S. Aboard Flimsy Boats](#)
[Jan. 26, 2022](#)

Neil Vigdor is a breaking news reporter. He previously covered Connecticut politics for The Hartford Courant. [@gettinviggy](#) • [Facebook](#)

A version of this article appears in print on Jan. 28, 2022, Section A, Page 16 of the New York edition with the headline: Coast Guard To End Search For Survivors. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)



IMMIGRATION

US Policy Prompts Some Venezuelan Migrants to Change Route

October 14, 2022 9:12 PM

Associated Press

NECOCLI, COLOMBIA — Venezuelan Gilbert Fernandez still plans to cross the dangerous Darien jungle into Panama and head toward the United States over land, despite a U.S. announcement that it will grant conditional humanitarian permits only to 24,000 Venezuelan migrants arriving by air.

"The news hit us like a bucket of cold water," Fernandez said Thursday, a day after the announcement, which also stated that Venezuelans arriving by land at the Mexico-U.S. border would be returned to Mexico.

Fernandez spoke to The Associated Press on a beach in Necocli, a Colombian town where about 9,000 people, mostly Venezuelans, waited to board a boat to take them to the entrance of the Darien Gap connecting the South American country to Panama. From there, migrants head by land through Central America and Mexico toward the U.S.

Some on the Colombian beach said they would seek other routes into the United States or give up the voyage after hearing the news. Critics noted that the announced number of humanitarian visas is just a fraction of the number of Venezuelans seeking to enter the United States.

No turning back

But for Fernandez it was too late to turn back. He said he sold his car and his land in Venezuela to finance the trip with his 18-year-old son and his friends, and he no longer has money for a plane ticket to the U.S.

"Those of us who have already started, how are we going to do that?" he wondered. "We are already involved in this."

The U.S. and Mexico said Wednesday that the Biden administration agreed to accept up to 24,000 Venezuelan migrants at U.S. airports, while Mexico agreed to take back Venezuelans who come to the U.S. over land.

Venezuelans who walk or swim across the border will be immediately returned to Mexico under a pandemic rule known as Title 42 authority, which suspends rights to seek asylum under U.S. and international law on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The U.S. offer to the Venezuelans is modeled on a similar program for Ukrainians who fled Russia's invasion.

The moves are a response to a dramatic increase in migration from Venezuela, which surpassed Guatemala and Honduras in August to become the second-largest nationality arriving at the U.S. border after Mexico.

So far in 2022, more than 151,000 people have crossed into Panama through the jungle, the majority — 107,600 — Venezuelans. That already exceeds the 133,000 people who crossed in the previous year, according to official Panamanian figures. The trip through the inhospitable jungle is fraught with dangers, including thieves, human traffickers and the possibility of sexual assault. Armed groups operate in the region.

Arrests of Venezuelans at the U.S. border have also increased. Authorities detained Venezuelans 25,349 times in August, making them the second most detained nationality at the border, after Mexicans.

For some, the offer of 24,000 humanitarian visas is not enough given the dimensions of Venezuela's migration situation, and many consider the conditions on those visas too difficult.

Maria Clara Robayo, an investigator for the Venezuelan Observatory at Colombia's Del Rosario University, said the flow of migrants through the Darien Gap might be reduced a bit but won't stop.

"People will continue exposing themselves to precarious situations" crossing the jungle, she said.

Reconsidering options

Jeremy Villegas arrived in Necocli in a group of 30 people, most of whom are turning back or looking for other routes. He said he is still undecided and is waiting to hear from people who are farther along the route to know if it is worth the risk.

Cristian Casamayor said he has decided to stop his journey through the Darien after hearing of the new U.S. policy.

"I stopped out of awareness and being smart. ... They mark your passport, and you can no longer enter the United States," he said, adding that he has not decided where he will go now. All he knows is that he will not return to Venezuela.

Mario Ricardo Camejo, a member of the nonprofit Colombian-Venezuelan foundation Fundacolven, said that while they appreciate any help and humanitarian visas from countries like the U.S., they worry the help comes with conditions that make it difficult on the poorest migrants. For example, having to arrive by plane and having a financial sponsor.

"Automatically, a filter is created that ensures the help does not reach the people who need it most," Camejo said.

Of the more than 7.1 million Venezuelans who have left their country because of the social and economic crisis, at least 4.3 million have difficulties accessing food, housing and formal employment, according to a report released Wednesday by the International Organization for Migration and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Venezuelans back in that country's capital agreed the new rules will hurt.

"The people who leave by land have no money, no visa, no family there" in the United States, José Santana said in Caracas' central plaza. "It is useless for them to say that they are going to let many enter by plane."



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The World Bank In Haiti

Haiti is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. Meanwhile, the country's economic and social development continues to be hindered by some fragility drivers. The World Bank is committed to support the country to identify pathways to responding to recurrent crises

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Overview

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Haiti's economic and social development continues to be hindered by political instability, increasing violence and unprecedented levels of insecurity, which exacerbate fragility. Haiti remains the poorest country in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region and among the poorest countries in the world. In 2021, Haiti had a GNI per capita of US\$1,420, the lowest in the LAC region, which averaged US\$15,092. On the UN's Human Development Index, Haiti ranked 163 out of 191 countries in 2020.

Amid the lingering political and institutional crisis, high vulnerability to natural hazards, coupled with violent gangs vying to gain control over business districts, the

[Haiti AR_001971](#)

economy contracted for three consecutive years by 1.7% in 2019, 3.3% in 2020, and 1.8% in 2021.

In such a context, past gains in poverty reduction have been undone. While more recent data to measure poverty are unavailable, the lack of improvement in critical dimensions needed to reduce poverty negatively affected household incomes across the country. For example, by December 2021, 65 percent of households experienced a deterioration in their incomes compared to the years before the pandemic, indicating that an already high poverty rate has most likely risen. In line with these results, estimations done by the Bank's team show that in 2021, poverty likely increased to 87.6 percent (\$6.85/day), 58.7 (\$3.65/day) and 30.32 percent when using the extreme poverty line (\$2.15/day). Haiti is also among the countries with the greatest inequality in the region. This is largely due to two thirds of the poor living in rural areas and the adverse conditions for agricultural production, creating a welfare gap between urban and rural areas.

Haiti remains one the most vulnerable countries world-wide to natural hazards, mainly hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes. More than 96 percent of the population is exposed to these types of shocks. On August 14, 2021, an earthquake measuring magnitude 7.2 on the Richter scale, struck the southern region of Haiti, an area where approximately 1.6 million people live. The earthquake's epicenter was recorded approximately 12 km north-east of Saint-Louis-du-Sud, about 125 km west of the capital Port-au-Prince.

The direct human toll of the earthquake resulted in 2,246 deaths, 12,763 injured and 329 missing in the three departments of the Southern Peninsula. In terms of infrastructure, 54,000 houses were destroyed while 83,770 other buildings were damaged, including schools, health facilities and public buildings. At the government's request, the World Bank worked with development partners to produce a post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) to estimate the extent of the damage and to chart a path to recovery. The results of the assessment of the effects of the August 14, 2021, earthquake indicate a total of more than US\$1.6 billion in damage and losses, or 11% of GDP. The same region was impacted in 2016 by Hurricane Matthew, which caused losses and damages estimated at 13 percent of the 2015 GDP, and the 2010 earthquake that killed approximately 250,000 people

Haiti AR_001972

and decimated 67 percent of the country's GDP. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency, intensity, and impacts of extreme weather events, and Haiti, while making some progress, still lacks adequate preparedness and resilience-building mechanisms.

On the human development front, after three years with no laboratory-confirmed cases, Haiti is experiencing a new outbreak of cholera, with several confirmed cases in some populated areas of the capital cities. Improvements in human capital have therefore stalled and, in some cases, deteriorated since. Infant and maternal mortality remain at high levels, and coverage of prevention measures are stagnating or declining, especially for the poorest households.

According to the Human Capital Index, a child born today in Haiti will grow up to be only 45 percent as productive as they could be if he or she had enjoyed full access to quality education and healthcare. Over one-fifth of children are at risk of cognitive and physical limitations, and only 78 percent of 15-year-olds will survive to age 60.

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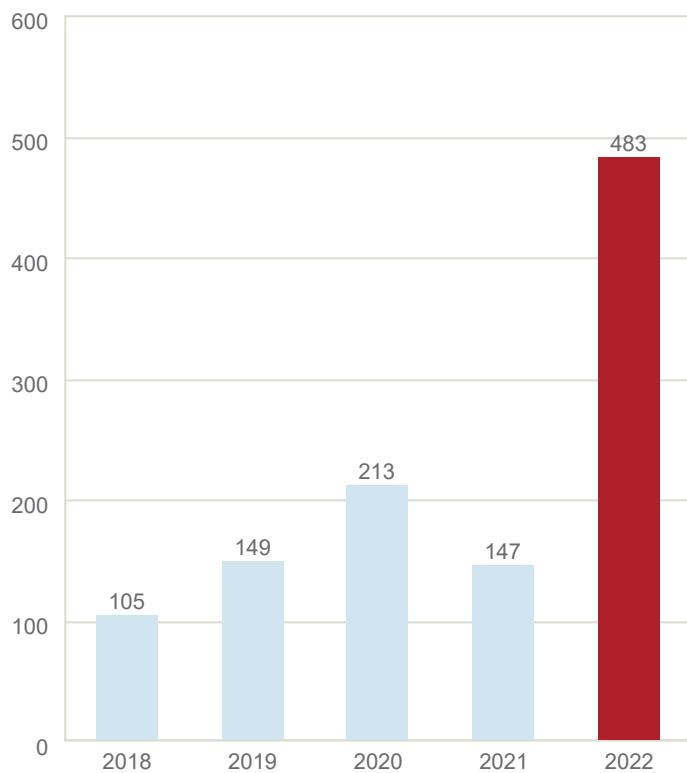
 **75,000**

children receive school feeding with the support of the World Bank.

[Source >](#)

LENDING

Haiti: Commitments by Fiscal Year (in millions of dollars)*



*Amounts include IBRD and IDA commitments

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WFP Haiti

Country Brief

September 2022



Nutrition screening and sensitization in Coteaux © WFP/Theresa Piorr

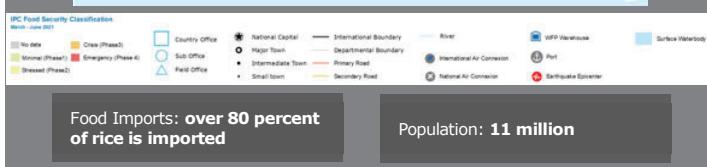
Operational Context

Haiti ranks 170 out of 189 countries on the 2020 Human Development Index. The country has one of the highest levels of chronic food insecurity in the world with more than half of its total population chronically food insecure and 22 percent of children chronically malnourished. Underlying drivers of this situation include extreme poverty and frequent natural disasters. On the 2020 Climate Risk Index, Haiti is third among the countries most affected by severe weather events.

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) results confirmed the September 2021 projections with slight variations. The total number of people in acute food insecurity now stands at 4.5 million (45 percent of the population), with 1.3 million people in need of urgent food assistance.

WFP's priority is to support the Haitian Government in developing sustainable solutions to hunger and malnutrition to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 "Zero Hunger."

WFP has been working in Haiti since 1969.



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 Country Director: Jean-Martin Bauer
 Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/haiti

In Numbers

USD 105.1 m six-months (October 2022 – March 2023) net funding requirements, representing 68 percent of total

USD 79.6 m for Emergency Response

Operational Updates

- In September, WFP, humanitarian agencies, and partners' operations and distributions in Haiti reached a complete standstill due to the country's security situation and fuel blockage.
- As of 14 September, WFP's national staff and staff living outside the compound adopted alternative working arrangements.
- On 15 September, protesters attacked WFP's warehouse in Gonaïves attempting to loot supplies. On 16 September, the entire WFP warehouse was looted and the sub-office was set on fire and destroyed. The stock in the warehouse summed 1,400 mt, including 300 mt destined for school feeding which were supposed to feed 94,000 children until December, and 1,100 mt of food to serve 78,000 individuals with a one-month ration, during crises. The loot has entailed 176,000 vulnerable people will not get food rations.
- Local radios have been broadcasting sustained incendiary messages encouraging people to gather around WFP's offices and warehouses to loot and attack its premises in Gonaïves, Les Cayes, Cap-Haïtien and Port-au-Prince. On 20 September, WFP submitted a letter to the Minister of Culture and Communication to inform her of these incidents countrywide.
- On 21 September, WFP's warehouse in Les Cayes was attacked and looted. The warehouse stored 762 mt intended to reach 46,000 beneficiaries with a one-month ration for the hurricane season and emergency programme. This food was key preparedness measure so WFP Haiti was prepared to respond in case a hurricane struck the south of the country.
- Due to the violent unrest and looting of WFP's warehouses in Gonaïves and Les Cayes, WFP lost critical food support for 218,000 highly vulnerable Haitians already facing severe food insecurity.
- On 22 September, following a review by the United Nations Security Management Team, the United Nations Designate Official decided to evacuate non-essential staff.
- The seventh tropical depression of the season transformed into Tropical Storm Fiona and caused heavy rainfall in the country. To ensure readiness, the country office reviewed its preparedness actions. However, the prepositioning of relief supplies and personnel, essential measures to enable a swift response in the event of a significant negative impact from the storm, was complicated due to the inability to move freely and the fuel shortage.
- WFP continues its efforts to support internally displaced people (IDPs) located at the Hugo Chavez Park IDP site in Port-au-Prince, reaching a total of 158 children (78 boys and 80 girls) between 6-23 months with 3,850 bags of Plumpy Doz assistance to prevent malnutrition through its cooperating partner [Haiti FAR_001977](#)

Country Strategic Plan (2019 - 2023)

Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirement (in USD)
469.3 m	366.9 m	105.1 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Crisis-affected populations in Haiti can meet their basic food and nutrition needs in times of crisis

Focus area: Crisis Response

Activities:

- Provide emergency food assistance and support risk reduction and the recovery of crisis-affected populations

Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable populations in Haiti benefit from nutrition-sensitive safety nets to meet their basic needs all year

Focus area: Root Causes

Activities:

- Design, implement and strengthen nutritious-sensitive safety nets for vulnerable populations
- Provide nutritious meals and complementary sensitization and training in targeted schools relying on centralized procurement of commodities

Strategic Result 3: Smallholders have improved food security and nutrition through improved productivity and incomes

Strategic Outcome 3: Smallholder farmers and their communities in targeted areas in Haiti have improved their livelihoods to increase food security and nutrition by 2023

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Develop and improve local production by strengthening smallholder farmers' access to markets
- Provide diversified and nutritious meals locally sourced from smallholder farmers, in targeted schools

Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

Strategic Outcome 4: Vulnerable communities in areas with fragile ecosystems can rely on resilient food systems to mitigate, adapt, and recover from shocks and manage climate-related risks by 2023

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide food assistance to vulnerable households for the creation and rehabilitation of assets to build resilience to shocks and introduce integrated risk management in communities exposed to climate risks

Strategic Result 5: Countries strengthened capacities to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 5: Centralized and Decentralized institutions and national stakeholders increased capacities to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide policy support and technical assistance to national stakeholders in areas of social protection, disaster risk management fortification and local production

Strategic Result 8: Countries strengthened capacities to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 6: The Government and humanitarian and development actors have access to services on demand all year

Focus area: Resilience building

On 26 September, the United Nations Security Council held an open briefing followed by closed consultations on Haiti. The Deputy Executive Director (DED) for Programme and Policy Development, Ms. Valerie Guarnieri highlighted that WFP's Haiti operation is chronically underfunded, and that the food security situation is expected to further deteriorate this year. The DED underscored that even before this latest crisis, the food basket increased by 52 percent, the price of gas had doubled, and inflation, currently at 31 percent, was expected to rise.

- On 28 September, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and WFP reached 251 families in Pestel through digital cash transfers. This was carried out as part of the "Projet de Protection Sociale Adaptative pour une Résilience Accrue", the first cash-based transfer completed in Haiti by WFP since the 12 September crisis.
- WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization [warned](#) that acute food insecurity in Haiti is likely to deteriorate further from October 2022 to January 2023, highlighting that reduced access to humanitarian assistance, lack of funding, high prices of fuel and goods and access constraints poses further challenges.
- In September, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights were canceled daily due to the volatile security situation. However, recovery flights were performed, to assist stranded staff from all partners. In total, 94 flights were performed to transport 217 kg of cargo and 524 passengers. In addition, on 15 September, UNHAS welcomed a helicopter MI-17 to the fleet, which will replace the current helicopter. WFP has obtained open releases with all fuel companies in Barahona, Dominican Republic for UNHAS to refuel there.
- WFP maintains fuel stocks across the country, which are shared with partners. Given increased requests, and with fuel stocks rapidly dwindling, WFP is exploring ways to restock.

Challenges

- Amidst growing armed groups violence and political instability, Haiti has plunged into an acute crisis over the past months. Rising food prices and a prolonged shortage of fuel have led to large-scale protests, which have intensified following the Prime Minister's announcement of the Government's intention to increase fuel prices on 11 September.
- Since 12 September, social protests have engulfed Haiti, blocking most main roads in the country and making it almost impossible for commodities and people to move as well as access to critical, lifesaving and basic services have been hampered.
- Also, since 12 September, access to the main point of entry for fuel into the country, the Varreux port terminal, is completely blocked by armed groups despite attempts by the Haitian National Police to secure access. The facility stores 70 percent of the country's petroleum products and represents one of the main access points for imported goods into the country.

Donors

Andorra, Canada, Education Cannot Wait, European Union, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Japan, *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, Luxembourg, Republic of South Korea (the), Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, and private donors. Additional support was provided by United Nations CERF, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.



Cholera - Haiti

13 December 2022

Situation at a glance

Haiti is experiencing a resurgence of cholera, with the outbreak initially reported on 2 October 2022 after more than three years with no reported cases of cholera, evolving rapidly, and spreading to all parts of the country.

There is also an ongoing complex humanitarian crisis that is rapidly deteriorating due to gang violence, socio-political conflicts, insecurity, fuel shortages, and economic instability. This has resulted in limited access to healthcare and essential services, including water, food, sanitation, and supply services. This situation makes the population of Haiti highly vulnerable to the ongoing cholera outbreak.

Description of the cases

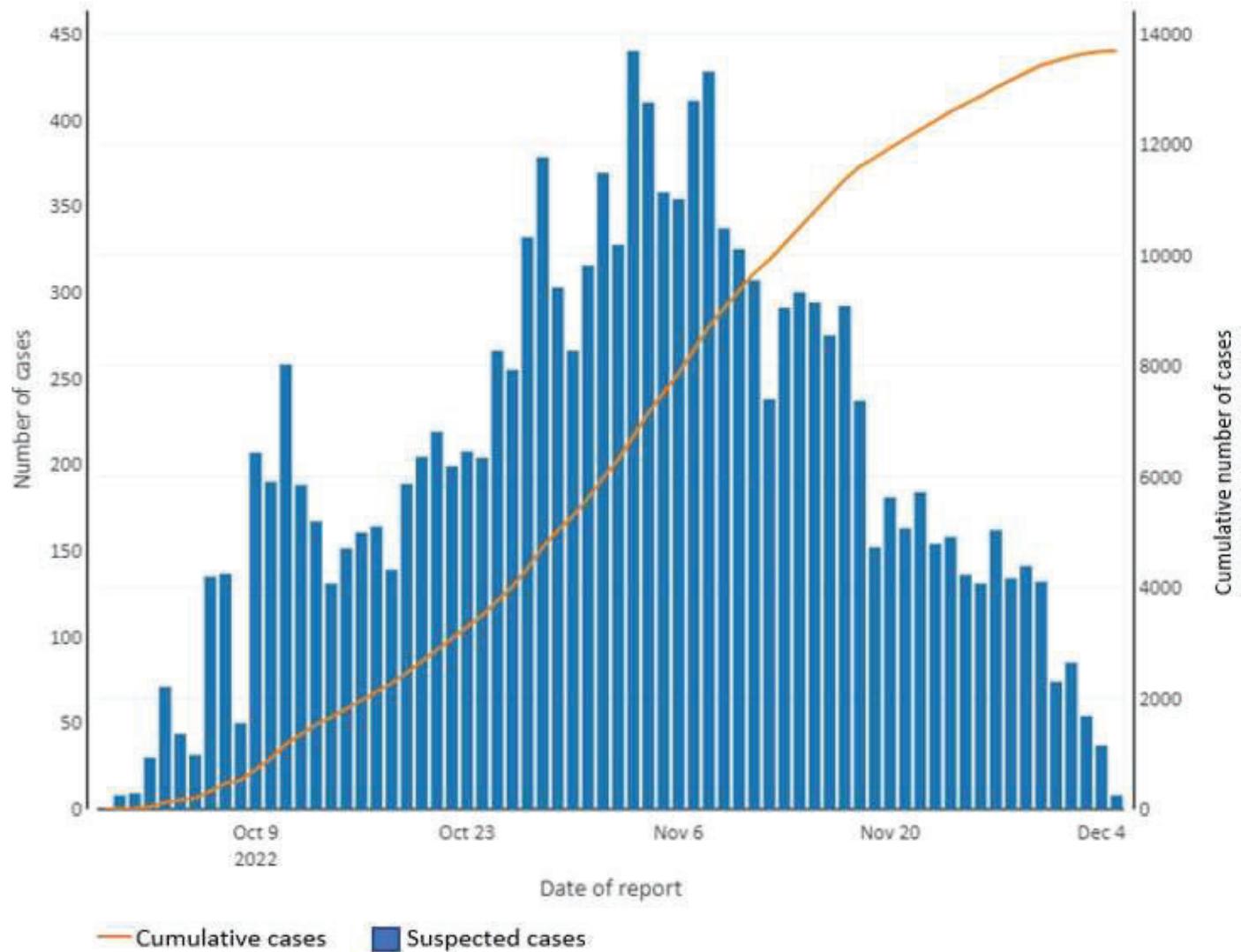
Between 2 October through 6 December 2022, a cumulative total of 13 672 suspected cholera cases, including 283 deaths (case fatality rate is 2.05%) have been reported by the Haiti Ministry of Public Health and Population from all ten departments in the country. Eighty-six percent (n=11 751) of all reported cases have been hospitalized. The Ouest department accounts for the highest percentage (89%, N=12 112) of suspected cases. Of the 13 672 suspected cholera cases reported, 59% are male and the most affected age groups are children aged 1 to 4 years (19%), followed by 20 to 29 years (15%) and 30 to 39 years (15%).

A total of 1193 confirmed cases have been reported. Three departments account for 94% of the reported confirmed cases: Ouest (79%; n= 943 cases), Centre (13%; n= 156 cases), and Artibonite (2%; n= 28 cases). Laboratory confirmation was by rapid diagnostic test and stool culture was done for identification of *Vibrio cholerae*. Of the confirmed cholera cases with available information, 57% are male (n=680) and the most affected age groups are those aged 1 to 4 years (19%) followed by 30 to 39 years (15%) and 5 to 9 years (14%).

As of 4 November 2022, a total of 368 suspected cases, including 14 confirmed cases and 14 deaths have been reported from the Port-au-Prince prison. These cases are included among the cases reported in the department of Ouest. Additionally, as of 21 November 2022, the Ministry of Public Health of the Dominican Republic has reported two confirmed imported cases of cholera, both from Haiti.

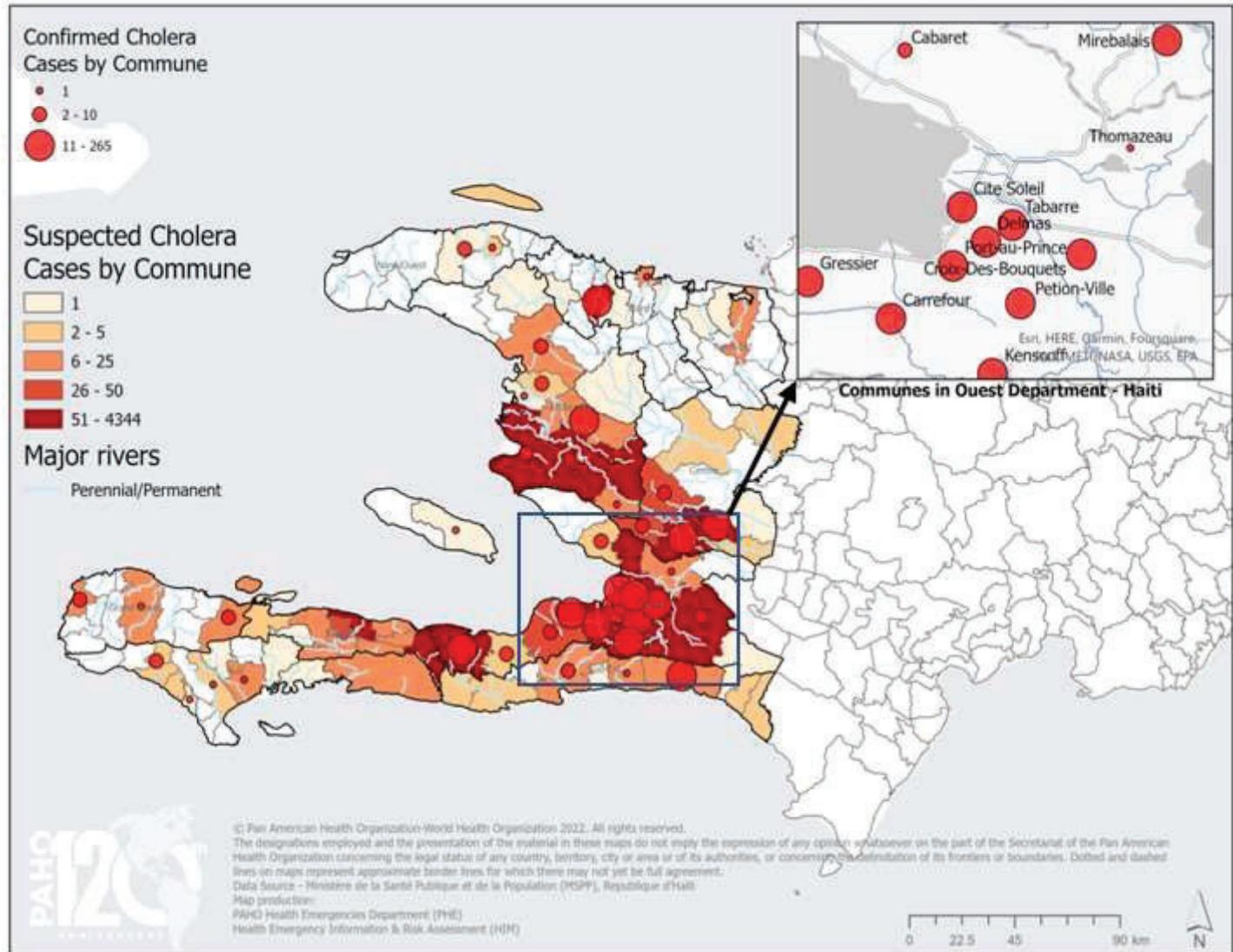
Cholera was first reported in Haiti in October 2010. Nationally, a total of 820 000 cases of cholera including 9792 deaths were reported between October 2010 and February 2019. The last confirmed case in this outbreak was reported in January 2019 in l'Estère in the Artibonite department of Haiti. The country did not report a single case of cholera in the three years from January 2019 to January 2022. The current outbreak is also occurring in the context of a complex humanitarian crisis that is exacerbating the burden of disease and hindering response measures.

Figure 1: Number of suspected cholera cases (n=13 672) reported in Haiti from 2 October to 6 December 2022.



Source: Haiti Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population (MSPP). Data reproduced by PAHO/WHO

Figure 2: Geographical distribution of suspected cholera cases (n=13 276) reported in Haiti, 29 September to 6 December 2022.



Source: Haiti Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population (MSPP). Data reproduced by PAHO/WHO.

Epidemiology of Cholera

Cholera is an acute enteric infection caused by ingesting the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae* present in contaminated water or food. It is mainly linked to inadequate sanitation and insufficient access to safe drinking water. It is an extremely virulent disease that can cause severe acute watery diarrhoea resulting in high morbidity and mortality, and can spread rapidly, depending on the frequency of exposure, the exposed population and the setting. Cholera affects both children and adults and can be fatal within hours if untreated.

The incubation period is between 12 hours and five days after ingestion of contaminated food or water. Most people infected with *V. cholerae* do not develop any symptoms, although the bacteria are present in their faeces for 1-10 days after infection and are shed back into the environment, potentially infecting other people. The majority of people who develop symptoms have mild or moderate symptoms, while a minority develop acute watery diarrhoea and vomiting with severe dehydration. Cholera is an easily treatable disease. Most people can be treated successfully through prompt administration of oral rehydration solution (ORS).

The consequences of a humanitarian crisis – such as disruption of water and sanitation systems, or the displacement of populations towards inadequate and overcrowded camps – can increase the risk of cholera transmission, should the bacteria be present or introduced.

A multi-sectoral approach including a combination of surveillance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH), social mobilization, treatment, and oral cholera vaccines is essential to control cholera outbreaks and to reduce deaths.

Public health response

Emergency response activities are being conducted by the Haiti Ministry of Public Health (MSPP), WHO and other partners as below.

Laboratory and Surveillance:

- WHO is supporting the Haiti Ministry of Public Health (MSPP) in strengthening epidemiological surveillance and laboratory capacity. Training of nurses and sampling teams have been conducted to perform rapid diagnostic tests in the Centre and Ouest departments.
- Given the complexity of land transport, WHO also facilitates the transport of samples to the National Reference Laboratory (LNSP) through United Nations Humanitarian Service (UNHAS) flights. A total of 35 samples from the Nord-Ouest departments have been transported to the LNSP.
- WHO is also supporting the Dominican Republic to strengthen its capacity to detect and respond to outbreaks and/or imported cases of cholera in its territory.

Clinical Management:

- WHO supported MSPP to conduct field missions to Artibonite and Centre Departments. The field missions aimed to assess the quality of services provided in Cholera Treatment Centres (CTCs), the capacity for scaling up case management, and to determine the needs and gaps for the cholera response.
- WHO continues to provide essential medicines and medical supplies to the Health Directorates in all 10 departments by land and air, with 49 tons of supplies, such as ringer lactate, oral rehydration salts and infusion sets delivered in the last 15 days.

- In addition, WHO continues to support the MSPP in the coordination and quality assessment for Cholera Treatment Centers (CTCs). Currently, there are 70 active CTCs throughout the country: 22 in Ouest (including the CTC of the Civil Prison), 11 in Artibonite, eight in Sud and 6 in Sud-Est, six in Grand' Anse, six in Nord, 4 in Nord-Est, 4 in Nord-Ouest, two in Centre, one in Nippes.

Access to safe WASH facilities:

- Training of the departmental health officials have been conducted on cholera outbreak response at the community level
- An investigation of WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) conditions in cholera hotspots have been conducted.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement:

- In Haiti, WHO produced and distributed over 90 000 printed brochures and posters with cholera prevention messages in the Ouest Department, with the support of partner agencies and NGOs.
- WHO, in coordination with UNICEF and the Communications Unit of the Ministry of Health (MSPP), developed a communication strategy to support the cholera vaccination campaign.

Reactive Vaccination Campaigns:

- As a part of the outbreak response, an emergency reactive vaccination campaign of Oral Cholera Vaccination (OCV) has been authorized by MSPP. The country applied to the International Coordinating Group (ICG) for OCV vaccine provision. The ICG partially approved the request for 1.6 million doses of OCV for implementation of the reactive vaccination campaign.

WHO risk assessment

The current cholera outbreak in Haiti, combined with the ongoing crisis related to gang violence, social unrest, and insecurity, has strained the health system's response capacity. The overall risk for this outbreak in Hispaniola is assessed as very high, due to the following reasons:

1. The current socio-economic situation, ongoing humanitarian crisis, food insecurity and poor health conditions are affecting a large proportion of the population, leaving them vulnerable to the risk of cholera infection and recurrence of cholera.
2. Limited access of the general population to safe drinking water and to sanitation facilities.
3. Due to violence and insecurity, the public health system and international partners have limited human resources in Haiti, reducing the capacity to respond.
4. Logistics issues, lack of access to fuel and insecurity lead to difficulties to import supplies and challenges to access the affected areas. Therefore, timely assessment of the epidemiological situation is complex. Additionally, for the same reasons the shipment of biological samples from healthcare facilities to reference laboratories is hampered. These challenges further increase the risk of undetected cases and delayed response efforts. The insecurity and access to fuel hinders the population's access to health care, leading to delayed treatment and potentially severe outcome.

Considering the magnitude and wide spread of the cholera epidemic that is ongoing in Haiti, in conjunction with the complex humanitarian crisis the country is currently facing, the limited resources to control the epidemic, as well as the constant migration flows towards the Dominican Republic, the risk in Hispaniola is assessed as very high.

In the Region of the Americas, considering the constant migration flow from Haiti to the countries and territories of the Region of the Americas, the heterogeneous capacity of the States Parties to detect and respond to cholera outbreaks, as well as the burnout of health workers from concurrent public health emergencies, the regional risk is assessed as moderate.

The risk posed by the event on the Island of Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) at the global level is assessed as low.

WHO will continue to evaluate the epidemiological situation.

WHO advice

WHO recommends improving access to proper and timely case management of cholera cases, improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as improving infection, prevention, and control in healthcare facilities. These measures along with the promotion of preventive hygiene practices and food safety in affected communities are the most effective means of controlling cholera.

OCV should be used in conjunction with improvements in water and sanitation to control cholera outbreaks and for prevention in targeted areas known to be at high risk for cholera as recommended by the Global task force for cholera control (GTFCC). Key public health communication messages should be provided to the population.

Given the re-emergence of cholera in Haiti and the imported cases reported in the Dominican Republic, WHO recommends that Member States strengthen and maintain cholera surveillance in order to prevent and respond in a timely manner to possible imported cases or outbreaks.

WHO does not recommend any restrictions on international travel or trade to or from Hispaniola based on the currently available information.

Further information

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Haitian Migration through the Americas: A Decade in the Making

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 FEATURE | By Caitlyn Yates



A Haitian man hugs his daughter in Peru. (Photo: © UNHCR/Regina de la Portilla)

The thousands of Haitian migrants who reached the Texas-Mexico border in September were met with stiff opposition from U.S. and Mexican authorities, with many later permitted entry into the United States, others put on expulsion flights to Haiti, and some others returning to southern Mexico. As dramatic and desperate as the scenes at the border were, this migration was years in the making and follows a long path that Haitians have been forging through South and Central America for more than a decade. In many cases, the migrants forcibly returned to Haiti had not been to their native country in years.

Although Haiti has seen significant political crises and natural disasters in 2021—including the July assassination of Prime Minister Jovenel Moïse and, in August, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake followed days later by Tropical Storm Grace—most Haitians who reached the U.S. border were not fleeing these recent challenges. They

are, instead, part of a generation of Haitians who have migrated since their country's devastating 2010 earthquake, which caused more than 217,000 deaths and left more than 1.5 million homeless. Many of these migrants first attempted to settle in Brazil, then Chile, then went to countries farther north, as local conditions changed and grew increasingly inhospitable. The relaxation of COVID-19-related border restrictions has eased their path northward in 2021, and the election of President Joe Biden may have led to some perceptions that migrants would be permitted to enter the United States. Propelled by these push and pull factors, thousands of other Haitians in South America appear to be poised to undertake the arduous, often dangerous journey to reach the United States.

The journey has resulted in dashed hopes and heartbreak for the approximately 5,400 Haitians who, as of September 30, were returned to their origin country by U.S. officials under a public-health provision preventing access to asylum. For them, the conditions are bleak. The August 2021 earthquake and tropical storm led to the deaths of at least 2,200 people in western Haiti and an estimated 980,000 experiencing food insecurity. In September, the U.S. envoy to Haiti resigned in protest of the expulsions, which he described as "inhumane" and "counterproductive."

This article chronicles Haitian migration through the hemisphere over the last decade, including the particular challenges that Haitians have faced in the region. Being both predominantly French Creole-speaking and Black, Haitians tend to face obstacles over and above their status as migrants, which has repeatedly resulted in exclusion from certain types of legal protections and frequent targeting for discrimination by state officials and locals alike.

A Portrait of Haitian Regional Migration

Migration from Haiti has been driven by multiple factors, including political and human-rights violations dating back at least to the Duvalier dictatorships of the 20th century. Beyond the vast number of Haitians who died or lost their homes in the 2010 earthquake, tens of thousands more were displaced by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Insecurity is rampant due to gangs and state-sanctioned violence. Moreover, Haitians also migrate for economic reasons, given that Haiti has the Western hemisphere's lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Finally, large Haitian diasporas abroad are also a draw for emigrants.

As a result, Haitians have increasingly looked to move to countries including the United States, Chile, and Brazil. Mexico has also become a destination for Haitian migrants, though UN Population Division estimates suggest only around 6,000 were residents as of 2020. While often overlooked, emigration out of Haiti is one of the largest flows in the Western hemisphere (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top Countries of Residence for Haitian Migrants, 2020

Country of Residence	Number of Haitian Migrants
TOTAL	1,770,000
United States of America	705,000
Dominican Republic	496,000
Chile	237,000
Brazil	143,000
Canada	101,000
France	85,000
Bahamas	30,000
French Guiana	22,000
Turks and Caicos Islands	16,000
Guadeloupe	14,000

Note: French Guiana and Guadeloupe are overseas territories of France but are classified separately for the purposes of UN population estimates.

Sources: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) tabulation of data from the United Nations, "Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, International Migrant Stock 2020: Destination" and "Origin, Table 1: International Migrant Stock at Mid-Year by Sex and by Region, Country or Area of Destination and Origin," available online; data for Brazil from Santiago Torrado, Rocío Montes, Lorena Arroyo, Carla Jiménez, and Jorge Galindo, "The Silent Exodus of Latin America's Haitian Population," *El País*, August 11, 2021, available online.

South America: Formation of Brazilian and Chilean Diasporas

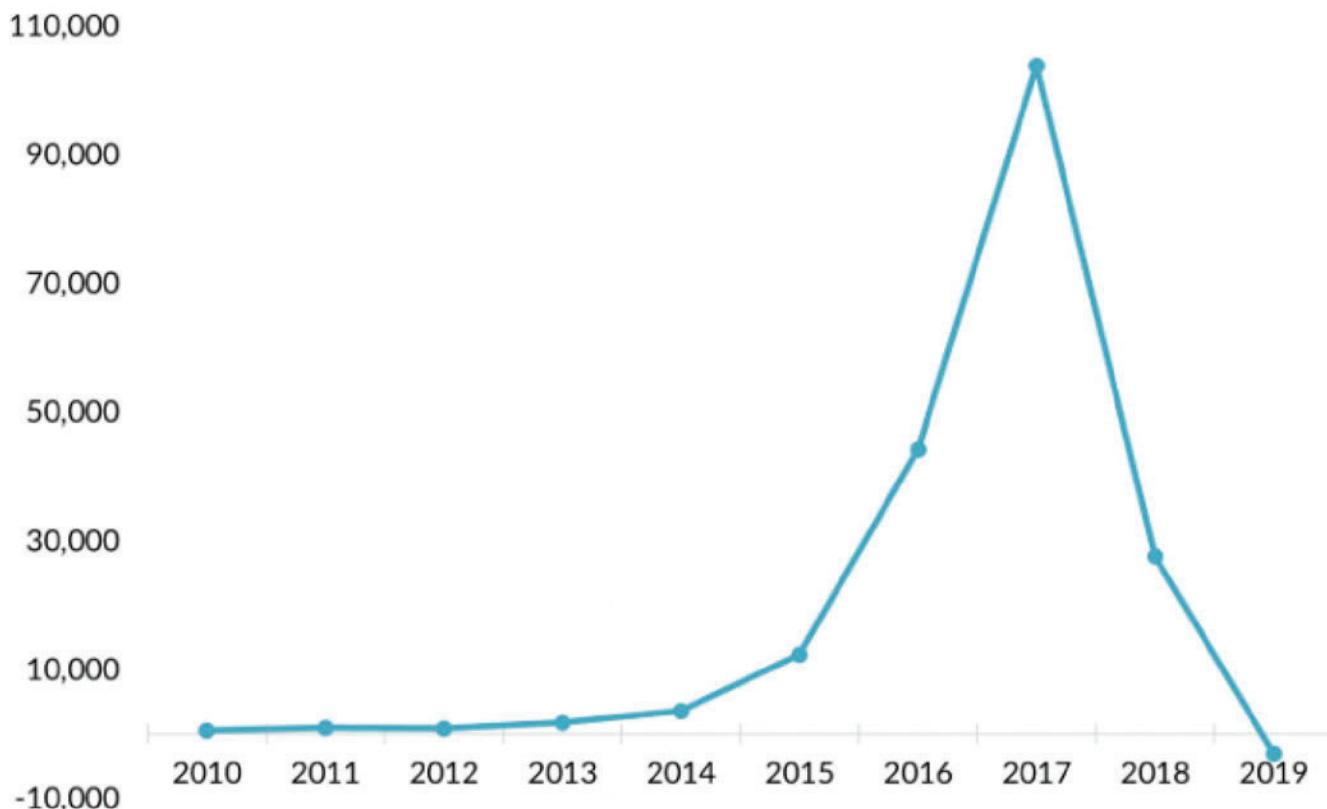
Following the 2010 earthquake, Haitians migrated to a number of countries, chief among them Brazil, where an estimated 85,000 arrived between 2010 and 2017. At the time, Brazil promised ample construction jobs ahead of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. The Brazilian government also offered humanitarian visas to certain Haitians displaced by the earthquake. Additionally, between 2010 and 2015, 48,000 Haitians requested asylum, and significant arrivals continued at least through 2019, when nearly 17,000 Haitians sought protection—more than any other nationality except Venezuelans. As of 2020, Brazil's Haitian population had grown to an estimated 143,000.

However, after the 2016 job booms from the games wore off, Brazil's economy stagnated and corruption and political instability grew. Many Haitians already worked longer hours and earned lower wages than Brazilians, and the economic downturn exacerbated their challenges. Those factors, plus persistent racism and growing anti-immigrant sentiment amid the 2018 election of populist President Jair Bolsonaro, drove some Haitians to see Brazil as an increasingly impermanent waystation.

For those who left, Chile became the top destination. In the mid-2010s, Chile was among the region's most politically and economically stable countries, and until 2018, Haitians could enter without a visa. In 2015, more than 12,000 Haitians arrived in Chile, and this number exceeded 103,000 in 2017.

However, the 2017 election of center-right President Sebastián Piñera led to immigration restrictions. Chile began requiring visas for Haitians in 2018. That year, around 27,000 Haitian entries were recorded. Then, in 2019, more Haitians left Chile than entered (see Figure 1). This is in part explained by the visa requirement, as about 69 percent of all Haitian visa requests were denied over the first two years. For those Haitians who did secure a tourist visa, Chile began to prevent most from acquiring a work permit if they received a job offer.

Figure 1. Annual Change in Haitian-born Population in Chile via Registered Entries, 2010-19



Note: Data reflect the number of Haitians who entered Chile each year and were not registered to have left the country.

Source: Author analysis of Fundación Avina and Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes (SJM), *Migración en Chile Anuario 2019: Un Análisis Multisectorial* (Santiago, Chile: SJM, 2020), available online.

These policy changes came amid growing anti-Black and anti-immigrant discrimination, along with limited job opportunities. In a 2019 survey of immigrants in Chile, Haitians were the least likely to be employed and reported the most workplace discrimination. About 47 percent of Haitians reported feeling discriminated against while living in Chile. By mid-2020, an estimated 237,000 Haitians lived in Chile, although many have since increasingly opted to leave, this time heading northward.

Figure 2. Map of Common Pathway for Haitian Migrants



Source: MPI artist rendering.

Northward Bound: In Transit through Central America

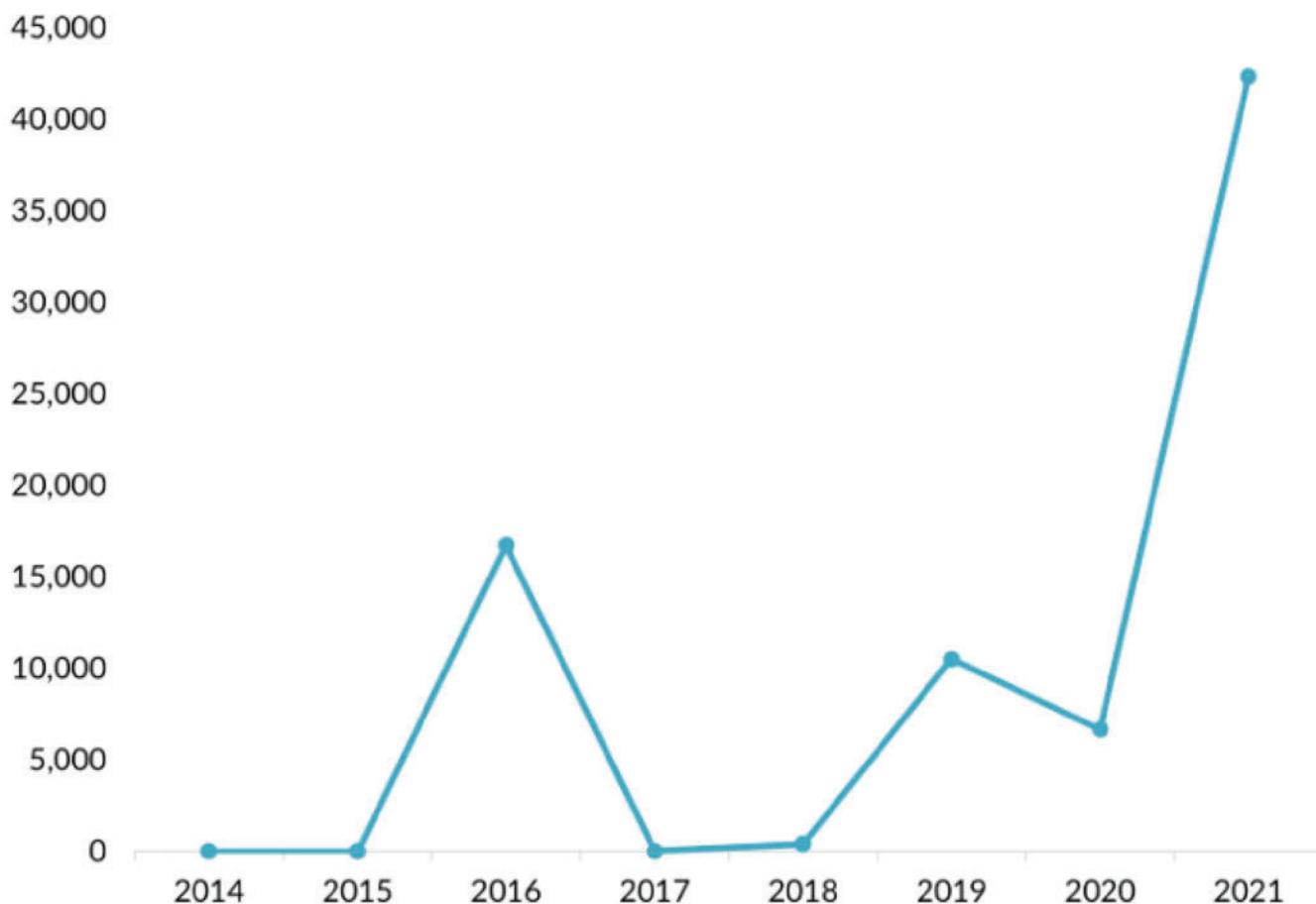
From Brazil or Chile, Haitians must pass through multiple countries before reaching Mexico. This journey can take anywhere from a few months to a few years, depending on migrants' resources, time spent in detention centers, stopovers for short-term work, or connections to smugglers. The most physically demanding and dangerous part of the journey is across the Colombia-Panama border, in a region known as the Darién Gap. Migrants must hike across the 150-kilometer (93-mile) jungle, which typically takes between four and 11 days, depending on the season. Migrants frequently run out of food, are robbed, are swept away by rivers during flash floods, or are otherwise injured while crossing.

According to Panama's border service, Haitian migrants did not begin to arrive consistently until 2016, when nearly 17,000 crossed. This was at least in part prompted by Hurricane Matthew, but can also be attributed to changing socioeconomic and political dynamics in Brazil. Since then, Panama has relied on a policy called "controlled flow" (*flujo controlado*) to receive migrants in camps in southern Panama where they are registered, screened for security purposes, vaccinated, and from where transportation is arranged for them to move northward toward Costa Rica. This lengthy process frequently means that migrants wait for anywhere from several weeks to several months in Panama.

With the significant increase in Haitian—and Cuban—migrants transiting through the region since 2016, Central American countries have struggled to receive them. Nicaragua notably closed its border in late 2015, leaving many Haitians and Cubans stuck for months in Costa Rica. As a result, 2016 was not only the first year that large numbers of Haitians began travelling through Central America, but also the first time that they were trapped in limbo during transit.

Since 2016, the numbers of Haitians transiting through Panama have fluctuated. There were approximately 400 apprehensions in 2018 but more than 10,000 in 2019 (see Figure 3). The drops in Haitian migration after 2016 are explained in part by the United States resuming deportations to Haiti in mid-2016, after a multi-year pause following the 2010 earthquake. While overall figures dropped markedly in 2020 amid the pandemic, the numbers have been unprecedented in 2021, with more than 42,000 apprehensions in the first eight months. Additionally, several thousand children born to Haitians in Chile and Brazil have also been apprehended, increasing this overall figure to around 50,000.

Figure 3. Apprehensions of Haitian Migrants in Panama, 2014-21



Note: Data for 2021 run through August.

Sources: Author analysis of Servicio Nacional de Fronteras (SENAFRONT), “Cuadro No. 001 Tránsito irregular de extranjeros por la frontera con Colombia por región según orden de importancia: año 2010-2019,” accessed September 23, 2021, available online; SENAFRONT, “Cuadro No. 001 Tránsito irregular de extranjeros por la frontera con Colombia por región según orden de importancia: año 2020,” accessed September 23, 2021, available online; SENAFRONT, “Cuadro No. 001 Tránsito irregular de extranjeros por la frontera con Colombia por región según orden de importancia: año 2021,” accessed September 23, 2021, available online.

By all accounts, 2021 is a record year for Haitians transiting through Central America. Colombian officials estimated in July that around 1,500 Haitian migrants crossed the border from Ecuador each day. In August, following diplomatic meetings, Colombia agreed to join Panama and

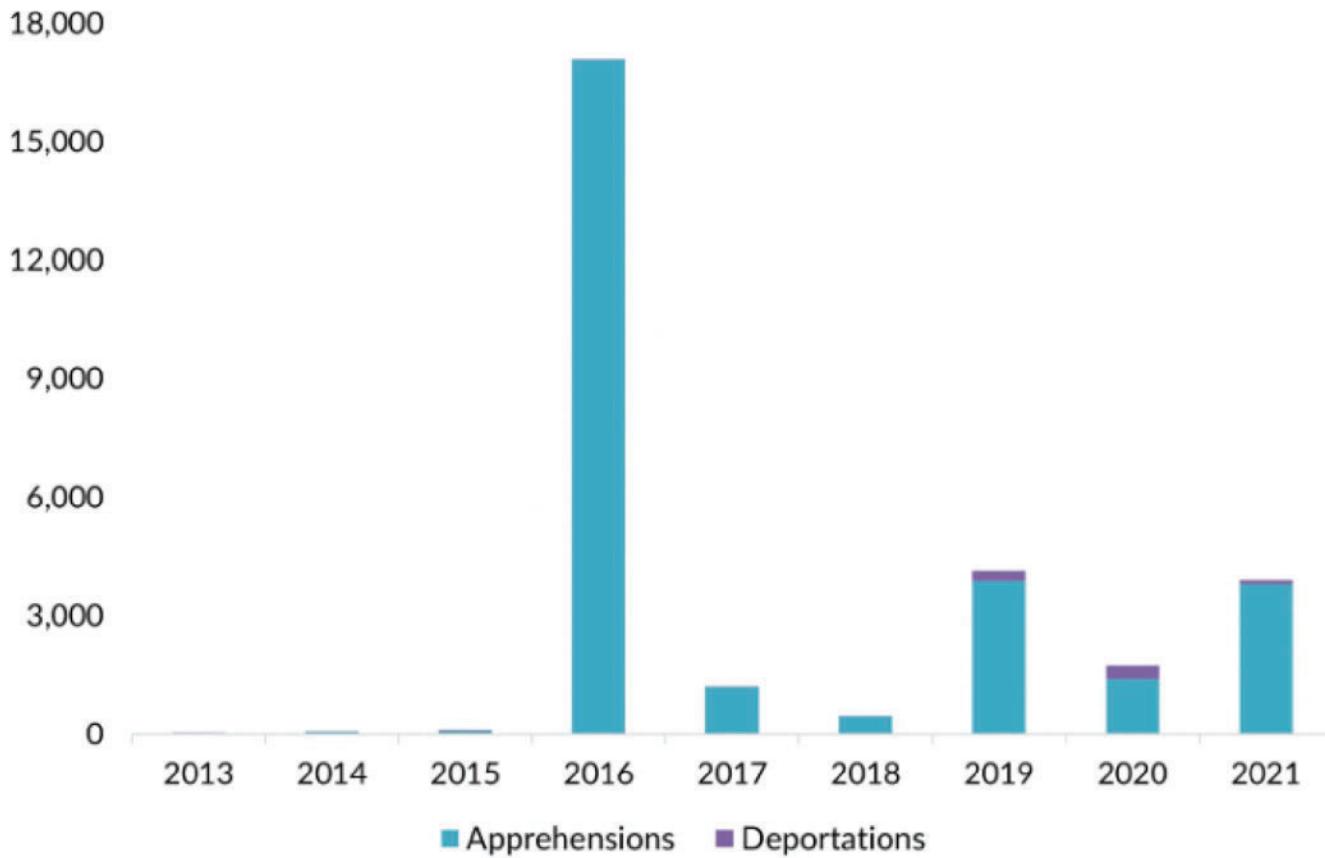
Costa Rica in the controlled flow policy and limit the number of migrants crossing into Panama. As of September, no more than 500 migrants are allowed to cross into Panama per day.

In the meantime, the numbers waiting to cross have increased. Officials in the northern Colombian town of Necoclí estimated in late September that approximately 19,000 migrants were waiting to enter Panama, most of them Haitian. Countries across the Western hemisphere have also established a high-level working group to discuss managing migration, but the large numbers suggest an indefinite bottleneck has developed in and around the Darién Gap.

Mexico

As of this writing, there are no large established Haitian communities in Central America, but the same cannot be said for Mexico. In 2016, an estimated 40,000 Haitians reached the northern Mexican border city of Tijuana. Although fewer Haitians arrived in subsequent years, many of the previous arrivals have remained in the country, either waiting to cross into the United States or settling permanently.

Figure 4. Apprehensions and Deportations of Haitian Migrants in Mexico, 2014-21



Note: Data for 2021 run through July.

Source: Author analysis of Government of Mexico, Boletín estadístico annual, multiple years, available online.

This is in part because many of Mexico's recent policies have resulted in Haitians spending extended periods of time there. In mid-2019, following pressure from the United States, Mexico stopped issuing exit permits (*salvoconductos*), which authorities had previously given to apprehended migrants from outside the region whom Mexico had difficulty deporting. These documents allowed migrants to transit through the country toward the United States. With the suspension of exit permits, Mexico has required apprehended Haitians without legal status to stay in its southern region.

In response to the end of exit permits, some Haitians applied for asylum in Mexico, although long wait times and low approval rates dissuaded many. Some were issued one-year humanitarian visas (*visas por razones humanitarias*), others were declared stateless and issued residency permits, and yet others attempted to find a clandestine way out of southern Mexico. In some cases, legal statuses were provided to Haitian migrants without their consent or full understanding. The result was that Haitian and African migrants in southern Mexico were effectively trapped, either waiting for documents or attempting to leave the region undetected.

Then, in late 2019 and early 2020, Mexico began deporting larger numbers of Haitians (see Figure 4). While Mexico has historically deported Central American migrants after apprehending them, Haitian nationals were treated differently. According to Mexico's Secretariat of the Interior, between 2013 and 2018, fewer than 1 percent of Haitian migrants who are apprehended in Mexico were deported to their country (118 in total). But in 2019, Mexico deported more than 6 percent of apprehended Haitians (263 overall) and nearly 20 percent in 2020 (341).

Deportations have declined so far in 2021. But Mexican authorities have continued to respond with strict enforcement policies. In August, authorities stopped Haitian and other migrants attempting to transit through Mexico via caravan, and in September authorities apprehended Haitians in the northern border town of Ciudad Acuña (across from Del Rio, Texas) and returned them to Tapachula, in southern Mexico.

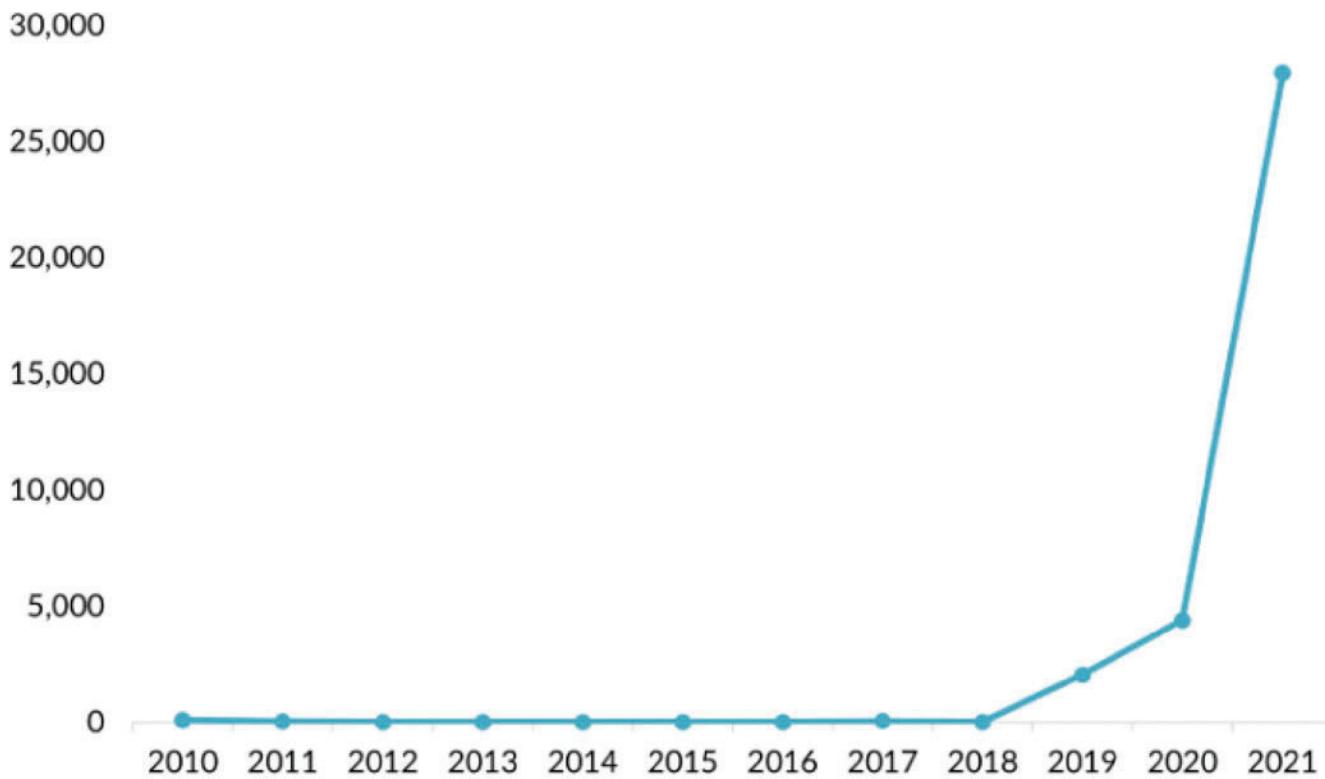
Meanwhile, Haitian asylum requests in Mexico have been on the rise. In July and August, Haitians for the first time represented the most common nationality of asylum applicants. This is in part because of the growing numbers of Haitians reaching Mexico from Central and South America, but also due to the bottleneck feature of Mexico's immigration policy, which forces Haitian migrants to either apply for status to leave southern Mexico, wait indefinitely, or travel covertly. Those who do apply for asylum can wait for months or years before receiving a decision. In the meantime, migrants trapped in southern Mexico lack the ability to work or access social services.

Still, a Haitian diaspora is growing. An estimated 4,000 Haitians live in Tijuana, with several thousand more trapped in Tapachula, and smaller numbers elsewhere.

The United States

The United States hosts the largest Haitian immigrant population, with an estimated 705,000 as of 2020. Many Haitians have been in the United States for years, if not decades. Historically, irregular Haitian migration took place largely by sea, but interdictions of along that route have remained negligible in recent years. Instead, arrivals at land borders have increased consistently. From October 2020 through this August, U.S. Border Patrol made more than 30,000 apprehensions of Haitians, nearly all of them at the U.S.-Mexico border. This marks the most Haitians ever apprehended at the U.S. land border, and the second largest overall since 1992, when authorities intercepted Haitians 38,000 times at sea.

Figure 5. Apprehensions of Haitian Migrants at the U.S.-Mexico Border, FY 2010-21



Note: Data for 2021 run through August.

Sources: Data for fiscal year (FY) 2010 through 2019 from U.S. Border Patrol, "U.S. Border Patrol Nationwide Apprehensions by Citizenship and Sector (FY2007 - FY 2019)," accessed September 29, 2021, available online; data for FY 2020 and 2021 from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Nationwide Encounters," updated September 15, 2021, available online.

This growth is notable in part because Haitian migration to the United States was already increasing prior to Haiti's mid-2021 crises, reinforcing the evidence that migrants reaching the United States in recent weeks have likely been on the move for years. That said, it is worth noting that the Biden administration has offered Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haitians who were in the United States as of July 29, 2021, granting them temporary work authorization and protection from deportation for 18 months. While this action will not affect Haitians recently attempting to cross the border, it did extend protections to 55,000 Haitians already with TPS in the United States and will allow an estimated 100,000 more to apply for new protection. Misinformation about TPS eligibility and about the general availability of legal status in the United States may have been one factor for migrants trying to reach the U.S. border, along with push factors out of South America and the easing of some COVID-19-related travel restrictions.

A Population Quietly on the Move

Dramatic scenes at the U.S.-Mexico border have drawn new attention to the situation of Haitian migrants, but many of these individuals have been quietly on the move for much of the last decade. As they traveled, they have contributed to the growth of diaspora communities in countries including Brazil, Chile, and Mexico.

While on the move, Haitian migrants in Latin America have confronted particular challenges, including intense anti-Black and anti-immigrant sentiment. Being refused work, not being allowed to seek medical treatment or report a crime, and other instances of discrimination often mark the experiences of Haitian migrants in ways not experienced by non-Black migrants. Additionally, Haitian migrants often lack access to translators or interpreters. Non-Spanish and non-Portuguese speaking Haitians are particularly disadvantaged when seeking legal protections, social services, or jobs.

Finally, an increasingly difficult challenge for Haitians relates to the growing number of mixed-nationality families. Children born to Haitian migrants in Brazil, Chile, or elsewhere along their journeys often do not hold Haitian nationality but rather that of the country of their birth.

This creates challenges when applying for immigration documents, for families looking to return to Haiti, or simply to prove individuals' familial relationship. It also presents complications for Haitian families recently returned to Haiti involuntarily by U.S. officials. As of September 23, at least 41 children who do not hold Haitian passports had been expelled to Haiti, forcing the Haitian government to begin discussions with countries such as Brazil on whether and how to return these mixed-nationality families to the countries of the children's birth.

While data do not show a significant uptick in emigration from Haiti immediately following the recent political and humanitarian crises, these events nonetheless serve as a backdrop that may have played into the decisions of migrants already in Central and South America to seek out new destinations. Still, emigration from Haiti will likely grow in coming months and years, fanning out to countries throughout the Americas where migrants may have families, friends, or work opportunities. As this migration continues, it will be important to distinguish between recent and earlier Haitian waves of migration. Analyses of Haitians' movement must also adopt a regional lens that takes into account this decade of hemispheric migration and Haitian migrants' unique dynamics and challenges.

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